



Innovation Implementation

About this Topic: Innovation Implementation



Topic Mentor

Kumar Nochur

Kumar Nochur is a consultant and educator with over 20 years of experience in the field of implementing innovation. He has taught business strategy, innovation, and technology management courses at Boston University and the University of Melbourne. He has worked with such industry leaders as 3M, AT&T (Bell Labs), General Electric, Gillette, Procter & Gamble, Johnson and Johnson, and National Semiconductor to improve their innovation practices. Dr. Nochur leads courses and workshops on topics such as *Skills for Innovators* and *Managing Innovation*. He is also a frequent speaker at conferences on innovation, new product development, and knowledge management. Dr. Nochur received a Ph.D. in the Management of Technological Innovation from the Sloan School of Management at MIT. He is the founder of [Vidya Inc.](http://vidyainc.com) and can be reached at knochur@vidyainc.com.

Topic Source Notes

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What Would You Do?

What would you do?

Martin is a project manager at a small engineering firm that specializes in designing cleanup strategies for contaminated properties. Recently, Martin has noticed that his clients seem eager to get rid of these properties. He is also aware of new land-use policies that push companies to reuse industrial sites instead of building their facilities on pristine land. Martin sees an opportunity in the real estate business for his company. He thinks that his company could buy contaminated properties at a significantly reduced price, do the site cleanup, and resell them at a huge profit. He knows the president of the company is eager to grow the business in a new direction. Martin wants to approach her with his idea right away, since he'd like to convince her to get into the business before competitors do.

What would you do?

Martin has a good idea and is enthusiastic about pursuing it. He should not rush to seek the president's support, however. He should first take the time to develop a compelling vision statement, identify his key stakeholders, and consider the criteria they might use to evaluate his idea. He should then seek feedback from his peers.

For example, Martin should approach his colleagues in the engineering department about the costs and risks of the cleanup process. He should also consult with regulatory and legal specialists about how ownership of the contaminated properties would be transferred. As he cultivates his informal support network, he would do well to identify a sponsor who understands the politics of his organization to help him promote his idea. After he builds peer support for his idea and gathers sufficient business information to lend credibility to his case, he will be ready to communicate his idea to the president.

In this topic, you'll learn how to implement an innovative idea in your organization.

Pushing your company in a new direction presents many challenges. How do you take an innovation from idea to reality?

Topic Objectives

This topic provides a framework for implementing innovation. You'll learn how to:

- Draft a vision statement for your innovative idea
- Identify key stakeholders and cultivate an informal support network
- Build a business case for your innovation
- Effectively communicate your idea to get necessary approvals and resources
- Manage resistance and keep people enthusiastic about your idea

The necessity of innovation



Today's business environment is rapidly changing. New technologies, governmental regulations, and global market conditions are forcing companies to quickly develop new products and differentiate their service offerings, while increasing productivity and cost efficiency. To maintain their competitive advantage, companies need to innovate.

When you hear the word "innovation" you may think of a technology-driven service such as online shopping, or a groundbreaking product such as the mobile phone. However, innovation comes in many forms.

For example, consider a new process for efficiently sharing information and internal expertise within a software development firm with offices in New York and Berlin. Employees who don't know each other could communicate client information and revise product specifications in real time.

This innovative process may not involve any new technology or result in a new product, but could give a company a significant competitive advantage by increasing the knowledge base of its employees and improving customer service.

Ideas are not enough

“ Creativity is thinking up new things. Innovation is doing new things. ”
–Theodore Levitt

Creativity is the process of generating and expressing novel ideas that are likely to be useful. The ideas generated during this process are the seeds for innovation. However, many creative ideas do not become innovations. Why? Because innovations only occur when ideas have been well developed, packaged, positioned, promoted, and implemented.

Successful innovators pick up where the creative process leaves off. They take a creative idea and apply it to a real-life problem, resulting in a new product, service, or process that gains widespread use. This topic assumes you have already identified an idea that you feel meets a need within your organization or solves a specific business problem, and you want to make it a reality.

You will find that if your idea addresses an established need you will probably have a relatively easy time implementing it. On the other hand, if you believe an idea is great but the need for it is not yet generally recognized, you will likely face a more difficult road. Don't give up! Both situations can be worth pursuing.

Types of innovators

New ideas become reality through the work of innovators. Innovators, however, rarely work alone. There are different types of innovators, each of whom play a unique role in the innovation process:

- **Idea generators** conceive ideas. Creative ideas can spring up anywhere in the organization, not just in the R&D function, which is traditionally seen as the source for new ideas.
- **Idea facilitators** help create the conditions necessary to implement innovations. They provide the information, resources, and support to help an innovation succeed.
- **Innovation champions** assume the responsibility for implementing ideas. The champion need not be the creator of the idea, but has the enthusiasm and commitment necessary to lead the process of promoting and implementing it.

Research suggests that a committed champion is most critical to the successful implementation of an idea, especially if the idea represents a radical innovation opportunity or if the need for it is not generally recognized. A powerful idea can remain dormant in a company for years because nobody assumes responsibility for implementing it. An innovation champion has the know-how, energy, daring, dedication, and perseverance that are needed to turn an idea into reality. While many people can generate creative ideas or provide an environment that encourages innovation, few actually commit to putting ideas into action.

Perhaps few people choose to take on this challenge because innovation champions frequently encounter resistance. Consider the development of the airplane. The innovators whose vision turned the idea of human flight into a reality did so in spite of skeptics who could not imagine how people would ever travel by air. Those innovators certainly proved the skeptics wrong!

Leadership Insight: Distributed innovation

One of my first experiences in thinking about innovation and the sources of innovation happened to me personally. I was working at GE Medical Systems in the mid-'90s, and we were focused in on creating new products and services for our customers in the digital imaging domain and I was a product manager at the interface of marketing and product development.

And we had just spend a lot of money and bought a new firm's technology that we were going to bring to the marketplace. And as I was scouring the marketplace to understand where the demand was going to be and what people were interested in, I came across these customers of mine who wanted nothing to do with that technology. They said, "We don't want anything that you built or that you're going to build, because we've done it all ourselves." And this seemed to be quite different than what I expected.

I'd been through undergraduate as an engineering and management major. I'd spent years at GE working, and to think that customers could innovate and could do the same problem solving as we were doing just didn't make any sense to me. So I went to this customer's site in Montreal and spent two weeks with them. And sure enough, they were 18 months ahead of our engineering schedule.

And this did not make any sense. I mean, we're GE, we bring good things to life. How could it be that these customers had basically out-innovated us? Now, of course the fit and finish wasn't so great, wasn't all put together well. It was sort of hanging together by duct tape and glue, but all the major engineering problems that we had said that we were going to solve, they had already done. And when I spent time with them and I tried to understand what they had done — they had basically worked with other users around the world. This is in the mid-'90s, so early days of

the Internet, and they had basically shared their knowledge and come together to solve these problems.

And this was just a puzzle that just did not make any sense to me. And I went back to my headquarters, tried to understand what was going on, and they said, "Yeah, of course, we're in this highly demanding technical field and sometimes our customers innovate ahead of us, and then we often take those innovations and bring them into our own products."

But they didn't have a systematic program to continuously tap into what their users were doing and find a way to bring it back into our system. There was just no infrastructure for this at all. And this was a puzzle that has stayed with me forever — basically, since I came across this in the mid-'90s, and has sort of guided my own research to think about the sources of innovation and to think that a lot of innovations can come from outside of the firm, outside of the four walls of R&D. And that affirms you to sort of be awakened to it and figure out how to tap into these innovations.

Many innovations come from outside sources, not just from internal research and development.

Karim Lakhani
Assistant Professor, Harvard Business School

Karim Lakhani is an assistant professor in the Technology and Operations Management unit at Harvard Business School.

His research focuses on distributed innovation systems and the movement of innovative activity to the edges of organizations and communities. He has extensively studied the emergence of open source software communities and their unique innovation and product development strategies.

Karim previously worked for General Electric Medical Systems as a member of its Technical Leadership Program. He also worked as a consultant for The Boston Consulting Group.

He is the co-editor of "Perspectives on Free and Open Source Software" and cofounder of the MIT-based Open Source Research Community and Web portal. His research has been published in journals such as Research Policy, Organization Science, Sloan Management Review, and Harvard Business Review. The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, BusinessWeek, Inc., NPR, and other media organizations, have covered his research findings.

He earned his bachelor's degree in electrical engineering and management from McMaster University in Canada. Karim holds a doctorate in management and a master's in technology and policy, both from MIT.

Different types of questions

“ Every organization—not just business—needs one core competence: innovation. ”
–Peter Drucker

If you choose to champion an idea, consider your level of commitment to the idea and whether you think it will work. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you have a strong conviction about the merit of and need for the innovation?
- Do you have a strong sense of ownership of the innovation, even if it originated with someone else?
- Do you have an overpowering desire to get the innovation accepted and implemented?
- Do you have a willingness to commit time, energy, and other personal resources over an extended period of time, well beyond the demands of your formal job description, to promote the innovation?
- Do you have a willingness to experience negative reactions and setbacks as you try to implement the innovation?

If you answered yes to most of these questions, you are already on the road to becoming an innovation champion! This topic will help you turn your innovation into reality in spite of the skeptics, the setbacks, and the obstacles you'll encounter along the way.

Key Idea: Implementation

Key Idea

Being ready and willing to champion an idea means you also need to be ready for the hard work of implementing it. Use the following steps to guide your implementation:

- First, **develop an inspiring vision of your innovation**. Capture your vision in a statement that describes your idea and helps rally support for it.
- Second, **identify stakeholders**. Identify the people who will be impacted by your innovation or who control the resources you need to implement it. Consider the criteria they will use to evaluate your idea so that you can address their interests and concerns early in the process.
- Third, **cultivate an informal support network**. You will need people to provide technical, political, financial, and other forms of support to make your idea a reality. In the early stages you will need informal supporters whom you can call upon as needed.
- Next, **build a business case**. The business case establishes the worth of your idea in terms of benefits to your customers and returns to your company. You will use the business case to generate buy-in and support for your idea.
- Then, **communicate with stakeholders and formalize the project**. Demonstrate to people within and outside of your organization the merits of your idea to get the resources and support you need.
- You may have to **manage resistance to new ideas and change**. Inevitably, some people will oppose your idea. You will have to work to manage their concerns so they don't derail your project.
- Remember to **stay passionate about your innovation**. Innovation takes time. To sustain momentum for your project, you will have to maintain your enthusiasm.

The steps taken to implement an innovation may not follow in the exact order listed. Some steps can be pursued in parallel or in a different sequence, depending on the specifics of your situation.

Once you're ready to champion a new idea, you need to think about the steps necessary to implement it.

Ignite the spark



Consider the following situation:

As a product manager in a company making outdoor gear, you notice that customers are increasingly interested in extreme sports, an area that your company is not currently serving. Glancing through magazines that serve this trendy market, you come up with an idea for a line of clothing using high-tech new materials that would appeal to extreme sports enthusiasts. Although this market is relatively small, you think it will grow into a bigger segment in the next few years. Your concern is that management might not be receptive to the idea due to its current limited market potential.

How would you get people excited about this idea? The starting point for success as an innovation champion is a powerful vision—a picture in your mind's eye of the completely successful realization of your idea.

Why develop a vision statement?

Since your vision is internal, you will need a means of communicating it to others. A clear vision statement functions as a communication aid to get your idea out in the world. A vision statement achieves the following:

- **It expresses in an exciting way the ideal outcome that you'd like to achieve.** A vision statement should provide a succinct, big-picture view of the positive changes that will occur once the idea is implemented.
- **It motivates and inspires people to take action in the right direction.** Ideally, a vision statement addresses goals or a common cause that your audience can identify with. By painting a picture that appeals directly to your audiences' values, they are more likely to be moved to commit to your vision.

Where to begin?

“ The creative process does not end with an idea; it starts with one. Creative ideas are just the first step in a long process of bringing thoughts into reality. ”
–Alex Osborn

Once you identify an idea, product, or project that you believe is worth pursuing, write down the answers to the following questions:

- What is the innovation?
- Do you have a name for the idea or project?
- What is your role? For example, are you the idea generator or champion, or do you have some other role?
- What benefits make the innovation worth pursuing? How will it impact customers, end-users, or other beneficiaries?

Next, you may want to close your eyes and imagine a time in the future when the innovation has been successfully implemented. Focus on the ideal outcome, not on how you got there. Then jot down your thoughts. You may want to do this exercise frequently to help develop a clear image of your idea.

To continue the earlier example, you might generate the following preliminary vision statement:

We have an opportunity to leverage our strong brand in developing a new market—extreme sports—that will become a major segment in the next five years. By applying our expertise with low-weight, high-tech composites to making a new line of clothing for this market, we can gain greater buzz for our company. I see the Omega line of clothing becoming the preferred choice of extreme sports customers. Our tagline can be: Omega Xtreme—Designed for Your Omega Xperience! This market will pay premium prices, so we will have a greater margin on our sales. The experience we gain with this high-end emerging market will help us spin off related new products at lower cost to other segments we already serve.

Key Idea: Characteristics of an effective vision statement

Key Idea

Your objective is to articulate your vision to the people who can help you make your idea a reality. Once you have the vision in your mind's eye, you will want to translate it to a format that can be communicated with impact to others. While some begin with words, others may use some sort of visual aid, like a sketch or a model. Your ultimate goal is to have a vision statement with the following characteristics:

- It must **describe your outcome vividly**. A vision becomes truly powerful when people can understand its goals and direction. Try to craft a statement that helps others "see" the future outcome in their minds' eye.
- It must **appeal to needs and interests**. Your statement should appeal to the implicit or explicit interests of your stakeholders.
- It must **stir up enthusiasm**. You will need to gain support for your idea to recruit a team. Convey your vision with excitement to stir up enthusiasm in others.
- Finally, it must **communicate effectively**. Strive to create a clear vision that you can describe to others within two minutes. Imagine that you only have someone's attention for the length of an elevator ride. How would you explain your vision?

A good vision statement will get your idea the support it needs. But what are the characteristics that make a vision statement work?

Test and refine your vision

Once you write down your preliminary vision statement you are ready to test and refine it. Be sure to:

- **Ask for feedback and take notes.** Assemble a few colleagues, friends, or other people you trust and respect, and ask them to react to your idea from the perspective of your intended audience. Make note of the questions they ask and listen attentively to their suggestions.
- **Modify your initial idea with the feedback you receive.** Constructing your vision is an iterative process. The feedback you receive will give you the opportunity to improve on your initial vision, retest it, and make it more and more compelling.
- **Be patient.** While some innovators instantly have clear visions of what they'd like to create, others build their vision over a period of time, as the idea and its impact evolves. You will likely fine-tune your vision several times before you feel ready to communicate it to a broader audience.

Your goal is to have a solid vision statement at the end of this process, but it does not have to be perfect. After identifying your stakeholders and developing your business case, you will likely work with your supporters to refine this vision statement further.

Activity: Forge your vision

A strong vision statement is the key to getting colleagues to support your innovation. Show that you know how to create and revise a vision statement.

Brian works as a mid-level manager at a company that makes software for small businesses. His company has typically issued new software at the beta stage to loyal customers to get their feedback. In exchange, these customers can purchase the final versions at a large discount.

Brian thinks that the company can go even further in capitalizing on the brain power of its customers. His idea is to allow trusted customers access to new software even earlier, at the alpha stage. In addition, he would propose making the company's programming and development tools accessible to these customers, so that rather than just suggesting improvements and new features, customers can try to create them themselves.

Which of these would be the best beginning for a vision statement describing Brian's innovation?

- ☐ "Open source software now accounts for a much larger percent of all software used in business than it did ten years ago. There are many possible explanations for this change. One, there is . . . "

Not the best choice. A vision statement is not the place to perform a market analysis. It should catch people's interest quickly and inspire them to visualize your ideas. Defending your vision with data and analysis is better saved for the business case.

- ☐ "Our business is people. People belong at the heart of everything that we do. When we forget about people, we forget about what makes us successful. When I first started working here, I learned this lesson quickly . . . "

Not the best choice. Though a vision statement should sketch your innovation in broad, inspiring strokes, it must still be specific and get straight to the point. If you preface your

vision with a lot of vague statements, you will lose your audience's attention before you can propose your innovation.

☐ "There is an astonishing amount of brain power and creativity in the online community. Open source software, blogs, and user-created media sites all show us that members of this community are willing to do extraordinary work with little or no compensation, simply to pursue their passions and refine their skills as programmers or designers. I believe that tapping into this well of creativity could be for the future of our company . . ."

Correct choice. This opening gives the audience a sense of the big-picture logic underlying your vision without getting into too many specifics. It conveys the sense that your innovation will help carry the company into the future.

You write out the following first draft of your vision statement:

"There is an astonishing amount of brain power and creativity in the online community. Open source software, blogs, and user-created media sites all show us that members of this community are willing to do extraordinary work with little or no compensation, simply to pursue their passions and refine their skills as programmers or designers. I believe that tapping into this well of creativity could be the future of our company. We currently release beta versions of our software to trusted customers for their evaluation. I propose that we release it even earlier, during the alpha phase. In addition, I recommend making our development and programming tools available to these customers, so that rather than simply proposing improvements to our software, they can make them themselves."

In its current state, what is the draft's most significant shortcoming?

☐ Needs a stronger appeal to needs and interests

Correct choice. The statement makes an exciting proposal, but is not specific about what benefits the customer or company can expect.

☐ Needs to try to stir up enthusiasm

Not the best choice. Although whether the vision statement succeeds in stirring up enthusiasm is subjective, it contains the sort of broad appeals that are clearly meant to stir enthusiasm.

☐ Isn't the appropriate length

Not the best choice. Right now, it is the right length for a vision statement: it can be read in two minutes (or less).

You show your vision statement to a colleague. She comments that "It's an interesting idea. But I guess I don't see why people would invest their free time in doing this." How should this comment prompt you to refine your vision?

☐ Mention a more substantial incentive for customers who propose and implement new features

Correct choice. Offering users a simple discount on software that they have helped develop does not seem like much incentive. The next draft of the vision statement should propose more substantial compensation for these users and their companies.

- ☐ Offer examples of members of the online community doing creative work for little compensation

Not the best choice. You have already done this in the vision statement by mentioning open source software, blogs, and user-created media sites.

- ☐ Do a survey of open source software programmers to determine their motives for doing work without much compensation and put that data in the vision statement

Not the best choice. A vision statement needs to describe an idea in broad outline. You should not try to anticipate an respond to every potential criticism with a store of empirical data; this is better addressed in the business case.

Who is affected by your innovation?



Stakeholders are the key parties that will be affected by your innovation. They can facilitate the successful implementation of your vision, or they can sabotage it! As you develop your idea, be sure to consider their needs and address their concerns.

While you may not communicate with all your stakeholders at the outset of your project, you should be aware of them so that you can address their needs during your planning stage. Later in the process, you will seek their support. The work you do now will help you influence them later.

The key parties

“ The force of any idea originates in the essential needs, perceived preferences, and unconscious expectations of the people it is intended to serve. ”

–Michael E. Gerber

Who are your key stakeholders? They can be both internal and external to your organization, and most likely will include the following:

- **Customers.** Potential customers or end-users, whether internal or external, are the ultimate reason for developing new products, processes, and services. In most instances, an innovation directly impacts them.

For example, your idea could reduce the price they pay for a service they already buy or could provide them with a new product to purchase.

- **Investors.** This group includes all of the people who control the necessary resources, such as money, staffing, and equipment for you to successfully develop or implement your idea. They could be at any level—from company executives, such as the chief financial officer, to department or division heads—depending on your company's managerial structure.
- **Intermediaries.** These are the people who are involved with the development and implementation of your innovation in some fashion. They appear somewhere in the pipeline between you and the end-users or customers of the innovation. They could include people in internal departments such as finance, manufacturing, or sales, as well as external parties such as suppliers and distributors.

You may also have other stakeholders that are less visible than those listed above. While these secondary stakeholders are more difficult to identify, it is advisable to consider them when planning to move forward with your idea. This group may include the following:

- People, both within and outside your organization, whose reputations, expertise, or track records enable them to influence decision makers.
- Anyone who stands to gain or lose something because of the implementation of your idea.
- People who are staunch supporters of the status quo, possibly because of their role in creating the status quo.
- Other people with innovative ideas who may be competing for attention or resources.

Evaluation criteria

By considering stakeholder concerns early, you will be better prepared to garner support when you need it, and better able to anticipate resistance.

For example, if you propose changing the inventory tracking system for your company, you could anticipate that the distribution department might have to work overtime to learn the new system while keeping up with current orders. Identify a way to make the situation better for the workers, such as allowing them extra compensation for the overtime. Then approach the distribution team members with your idea.

A common mistake innovators make is to focus on the features of the innovation and to spend little time identifying the benefits the idea will have for each stakeholder. When it comes time for you to present your idea to others, you are more likely to succeed if you have thought about the innovation from the perspective of your stakeholders. What would they be most interested in knowing about? What might concern them about your idea? Identifying these issues early will help you focus on the most relevant details of your idea when you meet with a stakeholder.

Each group of stakeholders will have its own interests and agenda, and will evaluate your idea using different criteria. The following is a list of potential evaluation criteria to consider for each group of key stakeholders.

Potential Evaluation Criteria

Stakeholder Group	
Customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we need or want the innovation? • How significant are its benefits? • How is your idea better than what we have now? • Is the added benefit worth the price? • Is it easy to use and derive benefits from? • What are the risks we could face if your innovation does not deliver on expectations?
Internal investors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the return on investment? • What are the nonfinancial benefits/rewards? • Is it the best use of our resources? • How well does it meet the goals, strategies, and culture of our organization? • What are the odds of failure? • What are the consequences of failure?
Intermediaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does this innovation require from us? • How does the idea impact our power, status, or work schedule? • How does this idea benefit our role or function?

As you gather information and develop your idea, make a list of the potential stakeholders and their likely concerns. You may want to approach some of them early for advice in an effort to get them to buy into your idea. Ask your sponsor and other supporters to help identify potential concerns and develop strategies for addressing them.

Activity: Please your stakeholders

To get an innovation off the ground, you must identify your stakeholders and appeal to their interests.

You work for a company that supplies industrial machines to manufacturers around the country. You have noticed that there are problems with the way the sales department keeps track of client information, which makes their jobs unnecessarily difficult. You have heard of some new software that apparently does a very good job of consolidating sales operations and client information. You want to recommend that the sales department adopt and begin using this new software as soon as possible.

Who are the customers for this innovation?

- ☐ The manufacturers your company sells to

Not the best choice. The "customer" for an innovation is not necessarily the same as your company's actual customers. The manufacturers may indirectly benefit from this innovation, but the "customer" is the person or persons who benefit directly.

- ☐ The sales department

Correct choice. The sales department will be the most direct beneficiaries of this change, making it effectively the "customer" of this innovation.

- ☐ Management

Not the best choice. Although management will be pleased if the sales department can do their job better, they will not be the most direct beneficiaries of this innovation.

Who are the *primary* internal investors for this innovation?

- ☐ Management

Correct choice. Ultimately, management controls all the necessary resources, such as money, staffing, and equipment, to successfully develop or implement an idea. In this case, management will have to decide to invest in the new software, as well as assign the resources necessary to implement it and train staff to use it.

- ☐ The sales department

Not the best choice. Although the entire sales department will have to invest time in learning the new software, they are not the primary internal investors. Instead, they are the primary beneficiaries of it.

- ☐ The IT department

Not the best choice. The IT department will be largely responsible for implementing this innovation, but they will not make the decision on whether to invest resources in it.

Who are the intermediaries for this innovation?

☐ Management

Not the best choice. Management will decide whether or not to implement this innovation, but the implementation itself will be in the hands of other parties.

☐ The IT department

Correct choice. Since this innovation depends on new software, the IT department will be the primary intermediaries responsible for implementing it.

☐ The payroll department

Not the best choice. The payroll department will likely have little to do with implementing this innovation.

What is the *best* way to make this innovation appealing to the sales department?

☐ Stress the potential increase in sales and, therefore, commissions

Correct choice. You want to sell your innovation to stakeholders by appealing to their interests as directly as possible.

☐ Stress the greater client satisfaction that will result from better record-keeping

Not the best choice. Although this is a compelling reason for the sales department to adopt the new software, you should speak *directly* to stakeholders' interests rather than referring to the interests of others.

☐ List all the features of the new sales software

Not the best choice. To make an innovation appealing to stakeholders, you need to make a connection between the features of that innovation and the benefits it will have for each stakeholder.

What is the *best* way to make this innovation appealing to management?

☐ Stress how it will make operations easier for the sales department

Not the best choice. Although management will likely be pleased that the innovation will make operations easier for the sales department, it is not the best way to make the idea appealing. Since management will have to invest money and resources into this new software, they will need to see how that investment will lead to savings or profit at a later time.

☐ Stress the ease in implementing the software

Not the best choice. Although stressing the ease of implementation will reassure management about the amount of resources that must be invested in the software, they will be more concerned with how this investment will lead to profit or savings later on.

☐ Stress the potential increase in sales in comparison with the price of the software

Correct choice. Management's major concern will be that their investment in this new software is profitable.

What is the *best* way to make this innovation appealing to the IT department?

- ☐ Stress how the software will increase sales and overall revenue for the company
Not the best choice. Although individual stakeholders care about the overall health of the company, the best way to make innovations appealing to them is to appeal to their *particular* needs and interests.
- ☐ Show them reviews that say the software is easy to implement and has few glitches and bugs
Correct choice. It's tough to sell an innovation to the intermediaries who will have to work to make it happen but won't see its benefits directly. For these people, you should stress the ways in which implementing the innovation will be less difficult than they expect.
- ☐ Tell them how enthusiastic management is about the new software
Not the best choice. Reminding IT that management is excited about the new software is not a bad idea. However, enthusiasm from management won't necessarily make the innovation more appealing to IT.

Power in numbers



It is rare that one person can take an idea from concept to completion. Typically no one person controls all of the information, expertise, and resources required to bring an idea to fruition. Implementing an innovative idea requires the support and assistance of many people.

Contacting people you already know and rely on in other areas of your career is a good place to start. Someone who knows you and respects your work is more likely to take the time to help you with your project than someone who doesn't know you and isn't sure of your capabilities.

Key Idea: Get early support and assistance

Key Idea

While you are probably excited about your idea and want to get started immediately, it is preferable to take the time to build the support you need. If you approach someone and say "I have a great idea for a new product and I would like you to support it. I will need your help to get financial resources and people to work on development and implementation," you will likely overwhelm the person and fail to get her assistance.

Rather, as you develop your idea, ask people you trust for small things such as advice and input on your vision statement. You could say, "I have a really interesting idea and would appreciate your advice. Do you have a few minutes to discuss it?" Use the feedback you generate to refine and shape your idea—and help you position it in terms of benefits to others. Then go back to the most helpful individuals or those who were most enthusiastic, and gradually ask them for larger commitments of time or resources.

As people get more involved in your project, they may volunteer to take on more responsibility for its implementation. Even if some people do nothing more than provide initial advice, by asking for their opinions early you are engaging them in the development of the idea and thereby establishing connections that could help you down the road. Engaging others early also gives them a sense of ownership in the idea that often leads to the support and commitment needed to make your idea a reality.

Pushing through an innovation requires a lot of support—and the sooner you get it, the better.

Assign key roles

“ Innovation. . . Is seldom the product of a single individual's intellectual brilliance. Innovation is the product of the connections between individuals and their ideas. ”
 –Gary Hamel

As you refine your idea and widen your circle of support, you'll begin to think about the kinds of people whose assistance you'll need to get concrete backing for your idea. Research has shown that the help of certain people can greatly increase the probability of success with innovation projects. These roles are:

- **Sponsor.** A sponsor is usually a senior person in an organization in a position of power. He often provides help with implementation problems and ways to present an idea more effectively to management. He frequently works behind the scenes to support the venture by helping to acquire necessary resources, and preventing the idea from being killed prematurely.
- **Gatekeeper.** A gatekeeper is usually an expert in a functional area or subject, such as R&D, manufacturing, or sales. She is up-to-date in her knowledge of her field and can serve as a useful sounding board and information resource as you develop your idea and build a business case to support it. Because of her extensive contacts both within and outside your organization, she can also connect you with other people who can help you with information, expertise, or other resources.
- **Opinion leader.** An opinion leader is well respected for his expertise, judgment, and insights. He is an individual that people frequently consult before making a decision. His endorsement lends credibility to your venture and helps accelerate acceptance of your new idea. On the flip side, if an opinion leader criticizes your idea, he can make it lose support quickly. Therefore, it is critical to identify opinion leaders to support your idea early on.

These roles are not formally designated job titles or responsibilities. Sometimes the same individual may play more than one role. For example, the gatekeeper may also be your opinion leader.

Gather a support network

People in your network will have different levels of responsibility and commitment to your project.

For example, you may meet with a high-level sponsor only once in a while to ask for advice or guidance on how to handle large implementation issues. On the other hand, you may ask a core group of people with technical expertise and marketing knowledge to meet weekly or even daily to discuss the details of your idea and to move the project forward.

The number of people in your support network will probably vary based on the size of your project and your organization. The network gradually expands as the champion identifies additional resources she needs and as people get excited about the idea and volunteer to help implement it.

Leadership Insight: The right kinds of failure

Implementation of innovation is one of the toughest things I know. I served as a director of a company called Landmark Communications, which owned the Weather Channel, for about 22 years. They said everybody is responsible for success. It isn't what you can't do, it's: what is the problem and what is your contribution to solving it?

But one of the big thing that Frank Batten — who is my hero as a manager — said is, "We have to accept the right kinds of failure." I saw him give a very large bonus to somebody whose division lost \$60 million. He said, "If you hadn't done a brilliant job of managing, we would have lost \$100 million, and I want my best managers to work on my hardest problems. So I have to accept if you do a good job, it doesn't mean we're always going to win."

Whether at the Weather Channel or the newspapers, this was a complicated business. And what he tried to do with everything he did was say, "We're in this together. This is about Landmark." One-hundred-eighty people shared in the stock value. When it went public and was sold, there were a lot of millionaires and multimillionaires created, because everybody felt they were on one team.

One of the other things I saw in him was he said, "We're not going to hit the ball out of the park. Let's just get a whole series of singles and doubles and other things that move us forward." So "continuous adaptive change" became the watchword. Now that continuous adaptive change over 22 years took the company from a value of about \$300 million to about \$5 billion.

People talk about clear lines of authority and responsibility — we want to make sure that we measure people and pay for results. Well, paying for results is crazy. You don't want to pay for results. You don't want to pay for effort. Effort plus skill equals performance, and performance plus luck equals results. And what I think typified Landmark and Frank's management style is he knew the difference between results and performance.

Distinguish between performance and results so that people can take appropriate risks to innovate.

Howard H. Stevenson
Senior Associate Dean, Harvard Business School

Howard H. Stevenson is Sarofim-Rock Baker Foundation Professor, Senior Associate Dean, Director of Publishing, and Chair of the Harvard Business Publishing Company board. The Sarofim-Rock Chair was established in 1982 to provide a continuing base for research and teaching in the field of entrepreneurship.

Previously, he served as the Vice Provost for Harvard University Resources and Planning and as Senior Associate Provost. He was also the Senior Associate Dean and Director of External Relations at Harvard Business School from 2001 to 2005.

Professor Stevenson was a founder and the first President of the Baupost Group, Inc. which manages partnerships investing in liquid securities for wealthy families.

He has authored, edited, or co-authored 11 books and 42 articles. Some of his co-authored titles include "New Business Ventures and the Entrepreneur" with Michael J. Roberts and H. Irving Grousbeck; "Policy Formulation and Administration" with C.R. Christensen, N. Berg and M. Salter; and "The Entrepreneurial Venture" with William Sahlman. His scholarly papers have appeared in publications such as Sloan Management Review, Harvard Business Review, Real Estate Review, and Journal of Business Venturing.

He received his Bachelor of Science in mathematics from Stanford University, and both his Master of Business Administration and Doctor of Business Administration degrees from Harvard University.

Timing

Typically, successful innovators first build a support network of peers and colleagues, and then seek support at higher levels. The timing for approaching upper-level executives can be tricky. This is an area where your sponsor's political savvy and knowledge of how your company operates is particularly useful. While it is important to get upper management's approval in a timely fashion, seeking their support before you have a strategy for influencing them could jeopardize your project.

Innovators frequently focus on influencing the decision makers and the people who will be directly impacted by the innovation. They forget to look for support from opinion leaders and customers. These groups can have enormous influence on decision makers and should be considered when you are developing your communication or implementation strategy.

Waiting too long to approach key people in upper management can be as problematic as approaching them too early. It is essential to get some key decision makers on board relatively quickly so that you don't proceed with a project without knowing if you'll be able to get the resources you need. Ask your sponsor to help you develop a strategy for approaching influential people and stakeholders at the appropriate time.

Demonstrate your idea's merits



Once you have assembled your support network and identified your stakeholders, you are ready to start building a business case for your idea. This task involves both creative thinking about how the innovation could unfold, and analytical thinking about how the idea will impact your organization, its employees and customers, and other stakeholders. The thinking and debate that goes into the creation of the business case is as important as the final document you produce.

The business case for an innovative idea contains the information you will need to influence people to support your idea. In order to get the approval and resources you need to succeed, you have to demonstrate to management and other stakeholders the merits of your idea.

For example, you may believe that your proposed innovation will reduce the time it takes to complete a weekly status report for your consulting clients. As you gather more information, you may be able to quantify the time it would save and estimate how that time savings will translate into increased profits for your company.

Getting started

You may want to start by creating a preliminary outline to use as a guide for research and input into the business case.

Your outline might include the following sections:

- **Goals.** Describe your idea and what you hope to achieve, in terms of technology market, or other relevant goals. If your idea is for a new product or service, explain how it differentiates your company from the competition and what makes this product or service difficult for competitors to imitate.
- **The expected benefits of the implementation.** How will the idea benefit customers or end-users? Explain why your idea is an improvement over the status quo, and the potential competitive advantage it could give your company. Also discuss why this idea is a good fit for your company in terms of how it complements existing technology, strategic plans, manufacturing capabilities, and/or plans for future expansion. In some companies, you may need to demonstrate specific measurable improvements in costs, revenues, profit, or customer satisfaction.
- **Milestones.** List the major milestones you propose for the implementation of your idea. In the interest of time, don't get caught up in describing the details of each step you'll take.
- **Potential obstacles and approaches for overcoming them.** Acknowledge potential problems or risks to show that you have considered them. Provide a plan of action for addressing these problems.

For example, your customers may perceive your idea for consolidating project management and account representative roles into one department as a reduction in service. To counter this

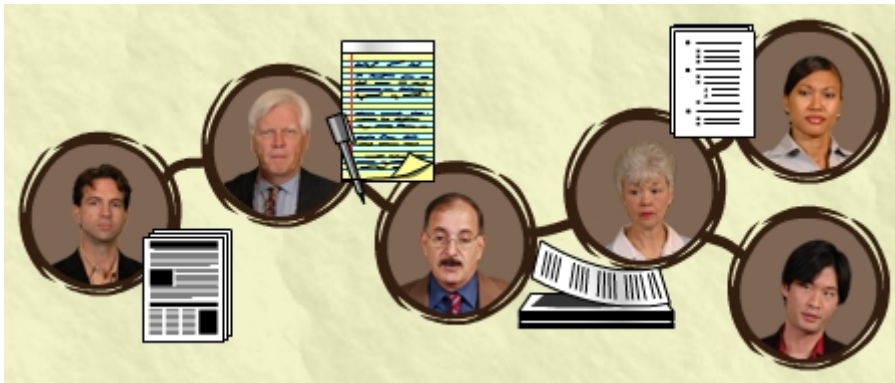
perception, you may develop a strategy for demonstrating how the change would actually improve their service.

- **A cost estimate for implementing the innovation.** Include specific numbers wherever possible.
- **Resource requirements.** Identify the resources you will need—people, equipment, budget, etc. As appropriate, include details such as the number of people you would need and their areas of expertise.

Preselling

Before anyone in a position to decide the fate of your idea attends a formal presentation or reviews your business case, they should already be favorably disposed to your idea. Get on the calendar of every critical decision maker. Brief them on your proposal, and ask for advice. If you are unable to address their questions immediately, do research to get the answers. Update your documents to reflect their input and acknowledge their contributions.

How long should the business case be?



The format for a business case varies from company to company. As such, there is no correct length for a business case. The form and level of detail of your business case will vary depending on your idea and the expectations of the people who will read it.

For example, an idea to change juice packaging to make the product fit more easily into a refrigerator may require a presentation that outlines your market research, the cost of the new packaging, and estimated sales. A more significant change, such as introducing a new juice flavor, would likely require much more supporting documentation.

Generate more than one version

Because the business case serves multiple purposes, you may want to consider creating at least two versions.

1. A detailed plan that outlines the benefits, obstacles, and all of the action steps for distribution to the people responsible for implementing your idea.
2. A less-detailed version for use when presenting your idea to potential supporters. This plan should be succinct—your presentation should take about ten minutes—and value of the innovation should be clearly stated.

You may also want to craft a one-minute elevator pitch—four or five sentences that describe your innovation and the benefits it will realize. This presentation can be used to get someone interested in your idea when you have limited time.

Update these documents as you gather new information or gain insight into how to get people excited about your project.

Once you have created your business case, you need to consider how you will present it to the stakeholders. What are their needs? What are their agendas? An innovation's success hinges on how well you know your stakeholders—and how well you can communicate your plan.

Activity: Evaluate a business case

The necessary elements of a business case are determined by your vision statement, which sets the broad outlines of what your innovation is to accomplish.

You work for the advertising department of a major candy company. The following is a vision statement for an innovation you are proposing:

"The effectiveness of traditional television advertising is waning. Over the coming decade, we will see more consumers receiving and viewing TV content in new ways, particularly via the Internet. This will give them greater freedom to ignore or bypass the advertising content accompanying these shows. At the same time, we are witnessing an explosion in the popularity of user-created media on the Internet. I believe that we should explore the possibility of sponsoring Internet videos and holding contests for the general public to create virtual advertisements for us. Not only would this be relatively inexpensive, it would do a great job enhancing our image as a modern, forward-looking company."

Given this vision statement, which of the following would *not* be important to include in your accompanying business case?

- ☐ Statistics demonstrating the popularity of user-created media sites on the Internet
Not the best choice. This information would actually be important to include in the business because. It will be needed to establish the expected benefits of this innovation, as it suggests a number of consumers that can be reached.
- ☐ Focus group results showing the "favorability" rating of your company's products among different markets
Not the best choice. This information would actually be important to include in the business case. By looking at the current favorability rating of your company's products, you can set realistic goals about how you'd like it to improve.
- ☐ Reference to a *Business Weekly* article about huge sales of flat screen televisions
Correct choice. This information would not be important to include in the business case. The reasoning for this innovation rests on what media people are using, not what screen they use to view it on.

You work for the advertising department of a major candy company. The following is a vision statement for an innovation you are proposing:

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Given this vision statement, which of the following would be important to include in your accompanying business case?

- ☐ Three-month plan for developing a company website dedicated to hosting user-created media

Correct choice. This provides a set of milestones for implementing the project.

- ☐ Statistics illustrating a decrease in candy consumption worldwide

Not the best choice. Statistics illustrating a decrease in candy consumption worldwide are not relevant to your case unless you can link them directly to the innovation you are proposing.

- ☐ Results from a recent consumer poll showing that television commercials are effective at establishing strong brand loyalty

Not the best choice. The results of a consumer poll showing that television commercials establish brand loyalty is not relevant to a business case for establishing viral marketing through the Internet.

Gathering support



Your success in gaining support for your innovative idea will largely depend on your ability to influence various stakeholders. Before even building your business case, you will have identified your stakeholders and their interests and concerns regarding your innovation. This information will help you prepare a strategy for gaining the support of each individual. Consider your strategy in terms of the

person's level of involvement in the project, how that person might evaluate your idea, and their preferred means of communication.

To get the support of your vice president of finance, you might prepare a formal presentation with extensive printed support materials such as cost estimates, industry spending trends, and the competitive advantage of your innovation. To gain the support of the manufacturing manager whose department will have to implement your change, you might use an entirely different approach. You might forgo the presentation and instead ask for an informal meeting. You might start the meeting by acknowledging how important the department is to the company and asking the manager to help you figure out how to best implement your idea. Consider explaining the benefits of your innovation and how it might make his workers' jobs easier in the long run.

Sell the idea

“ One of the best ways to persuade others is with your ears – by listening to them. ”
–Dean Rusk

Your goal in communicating your idea is to influence your stakeholders to support your innovation. Essentially, you are "selling" the idea. When you describe your idea to each of your stakeholders, you will want to remember the acronym AIDA:

- Generate *awareness* of your innovation
- Arouse *interest* in your ideas
- Create *desire* for your idea by demonstrating its benefits
- Ask for *action* to help implement your innovation successfully

Key Idea: Make an effective presentation

Key Idea

A presentation may be the best way to sell your idea. Some guiding principles to use when preparing a presentation include:

- **Identify the need for your project.** Describe the need for your project in terms of how it solves a recognized problem or helps exploit a desired opportunity that your audience can relate to.
- **Position your innovation.** Appeal to the needs, priorities, interests, and problems that are foremost in the mind of the person with whom you are communicating.
- **Use language that people can understand.** Strive for simplicity and eliminate jargon wherever possible. Use examples that are relevant to your audience's needs.
- **Develop a unique value proposition for the audience.** Create a concise statement that powerfully conveys the essential benefits of your idea. Differentiate your idea from others by highlighting its advantages.
- **Have a clear idea of what you are asking of people.** Are you seeking their support? Do you need resources? People will want to know how you plan to involve them in your project.
- **Treat resistance and criticism as useful feedback.** Encourage people to provide feedback and voice concerns. You want to be able to understand concerns so you can address them directly. Explain that their input will help strengthen your project.

- Finally, **use multiple forums**. Tailor the medium you use to communicate your idea to your audience.

For example, you may choose individual informal meetings with some stakeholders while more formal group presentations may be more appropriate for others.

A good presentation can win your innovation the support that it needs. How do you make your presentation as effective as possible?

Formalize the project

As you communicate with stakeholders, work with your sponsor to identify the individuals whose approval will be necessary to continue with your project. Once you get the support of these decision makers, you will then be in a position to ask for the resources you need to formally implement your idea. These resources will likely include the people who will work on the idea and the funding to support their work.

At this point, your project may become formal enough to need a project manager. A project manager is a detail-oriented person who can help plan and coordinate the implementation of your idea. Typically, this person is skilled at navigating organizational processes. You may choose to assume this role yourself or you may seek someone else to fill the role.

Types of resistance



New ideas often meet with resistance. Since innovations threaten the status quo, resistance is a normal reaction.

For example, an R&D manager may be threatened by your idea for newly formulated house paint. She may see it as an encroachment on her territory. Or, an engineering manager may view a new electronic timesheet as a nuisance, even though it may increase efficiency in the accounting department.

You will probably encounter two types of resistance: explicit and hidden. To be a successful innovation champion, you need to anticipate resistance and be prepared to manage it. Tap your sponsors and other facilitators to help you develop a strategy to overcome both types of resistance.

Explicit resistance

“ There is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor more difficult to manage, than the creation of a new system. ”
–Niccolo Machiavelli

Explicit resistance comes in the form of open criticism. It is easier to manage because it is visible. Consider the idea to change the formula for house paint. You might hear that your innovation is:

- **Not needed in the marketplace or in the business.** "Our paint sells well and customers report a high level of satisfaction. Why do we need a new formula?" or "Our process works perfectly well as it is. No change is needed."
- **Too risky.** "There are too many unknowns about how the new paint formula will work. We may lose customers if it's not as good as our current product."
- **Too expensive.** "We are already strapped for cash. We don't have money to invest in a new initiative."
- **Bound to fail.** "Two years ago we reformulated the barn red color to make it brighter. It was a total flop and we lost a lot of customers."
- **Not technically feasible.** "The new formula cannot be manufactured to our quality standards. It won't hold up under extreme weather conditions."

Hidden resistance

Managing hidden resistance is a greater challenge. Since it is generally passive, it is more difficult to recognize. It often surfaces during the action phase of a project, such as when you are trying to mobilize the work group. People may miss deadlines, respond to requests late, or argue over allocation of time and resources among projects. Sometimes these may occur for genuine reasons, but they may also indicate hidden resistance.

For example, you may have sought cost and price estimates for your new paint formula from executives in many departments including manufacturing, sales, and R&D. While these people may have seemed positive about the project in your initial meetings, they may drag their feet once you try to implement it. You will then have to identify the cause of this hidden resistance and deal with it effectively to make progress.

Causes of resistance

A prominent person who opposes your innovative idea can easily derail your effort. Therefore, the first step is to determine whether or not the person is a critical stakeholder or can influence an important decision maker. If the person is not on your critical path, you may be able to ignore her objections. In most cases, however, you will need to address people's concerns to get them to work toward your idea's implementation.

Resistance is not usually a problem in itself; it is a symptom of an underlying issue. Typically, it can be caused by the following:

- Fear of the unknown
- A belief that the innovation is not necessary
- Personality conflicts
- The desire to protect oneself from risk or uncertainty
- An assessment or understanding that differs from yours
- Lack of rewards for innovating or accepting change

- Fear of disruption of organizational order or company culture
- Concern about workload or available resources

If you can identify the cause of the resistance, you are in a better position to directly address it.

For example, the R&D manager who says that your new paint formula is not technically sound may really think the materials you suggest using will not stand up to testing—or perhaps the reason for her resistance is less obvious. For example, she might be trying to protect her credibility. She may feel insecure because you, as an outsider, have identified a potentially better way of doing things. Knowing that insecurity is at the root of her resistance can help you develop a strategy for winning her acceptance. Sit down with her and acknowledge her expertise in this area. Ask her to explain her concerns and see if she has any advice for how to improve upon your idea. Find the valuable part of her criticism and later thank her for her help.

Participation can help overcome opposition. If you continue to involve this manager by seeking her opinion as you proceed, there is a good chance she will start to see herself as part of your support system—and may feel more secure about herself and the project.

Tactics for overcoming resistance

“Innovative accomplishments. . . generally involve acquiring and using power and influence.”

–Rosabeth Moss Kanter

Tactics for overcoming resistance include:

Tactic	Method	Example
Persuasion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use data, evidence, facts, and logic. • Communicate the features and benefits of your idea. 	<p>If the sales director resists your new paint formula because she fears that you may lose customers, review your market and product research with her. Highlight the benefits. Will this formula generate less waste, thereby appealing to an environmentally</p>

		conscious consumer? Will it cost less than your current formula? Show her the need for this product and try to convince her that customers will respond positively.
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve the person by asking for ideas or other contributions to the project. • Share ownership or credit for your idea or its implementation with this person. • Thank this person for his assistance and acknowledge his efforts in front of managers and other influential people. 	The head of purchasing might feel threatened by your suggestion to change the company's supply chain management system. Try to get him involved in your project early. Ask for his advice. Give him credit for his good ideas in group meetings to make him feel more involved.
Facilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide skills training and other forms of transition support to help the person feel less overwhelmed. • Help those affected 	An idea to restructure the sales team to focus on industry sectors may mean extra work for salespeople while they

	<p>adversely by the innovation to adapt to it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain the additional resources necessary to make the person more comfortable with your idea. 	<p>become experts in areas they know little about. Make it your responsibility to help them with training or other resources to facilitate their acceptance of the innovation. Look for opportunities to help them learn quickly so that they can focus on the selling process.</p>
Negotiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the aspects of the project that are of concern and explore possible alternatives that address the source of the resistance. Make compromises or trade-offs in the design or implementation of your idea. 	<p>If manufacturing says your formula is hard to make to their quality standards, explore alternative formulations or materials that will address their concerns and modify the paint accordingly.</p>
Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use power or authority to ask that something be done. Exercise your power, or seek the authority of a high-level 	<p>After the completion of your pilot project, you ask a team member to report on his findings by the following week.</p>

supporter or sponsor.

Three weeks later, this person has yet to deliver any results. It may be time for someone in upper management to emphasize the importance of your project and its high priority.

Be prepared to encounter resistance throughout your project. Keep a clear head and continue to focus on your vision. Maintaining a positive attitude and recognizing that all innovators have to overcome obstacles along the way will help you stay the course and successfully implement your idea.

Activity: Get past resistance

Different methods of overcoming resistance are appropriate for different stakeholders and situations. Practice choosing the right methods for various situations.

You are an assistant product manager in an electronic gaming company. You recently suggested that your company begin to distribute games primarily through digital downloads as opposed to retail sales. You have now been asked to manage the switch to online distribution.

The vice president of the marketing department continually raises objections to your new distribution plan in meetings. He says that he feels this innovation doesn't capitalize on the marketing department's past work, all of which has focused on promoting retail sales. What is the best method to overcome his resistance?

☐ Participation

Correct choice. The vice president of marketing seems concerned about the marketing department losing relevance. Giving him a more substantial role in implementing the new distribution model ought to help assuage these concerns. He might be able to contribute creative ways that existing marketing materials or contacts for the retail environment could be repurposed for online distribution.

☐ Direction

Not the best choice. You do not have authority over the vice president, nor is a simple objection a justifiable reason to ask a superior to take action in this case.

☐ Facilitation

Not the best choice. Facilitation works best when there is a recognized need for training or a lack of transitional resources to support an idea's implementation. Since it doesn't appear that the vice president's discomfort with the new distribution model stems from either of these needs, facilitation is not likely to prove useful.

Midway through the implementation of online distribution, a new executive joins the company. Claiming that the company's typical customers are not ready for online distribution, she argues that overall sales will suffer under the new distribution model. You are afraid she might try to shut your innovation down. What is the best method to overcome her resistance?

☐ Persuasion

Correct choice. This executive is not sold on the innovation that you are trying to implement. If you can present reasonable evidence that online distribution is just as lucrative as retail, she will likely be persuaded. Because she is new to the company, she will likely find a combination of external evidence (industry statistics) and internal support (from other executives) most convincing.

☐ Negotiation

Not the best choice. Negotiation is more appropriate when there is some common ground; but this executive is doubtful about the entire concept of online distribution. Therefore, making trade-offs and offering compromises in the implementation of your idea will not likely prove effective.

☐ Participation

Not the best choice. Right now, the executive probably has no desire to be involved in the implementation of your innovation, as she is not convinced that it is a good idea.

You believe that your company must reduce the prices of games sold as digital downloads, since the customer is not paying for any physical product. Although he understands this, the chief financial officer is still concerned that prices for the games distributed online will be too low. What is the best method to overcome his resistance?

☐ Direction

Not the best choice. You do not have the authority to insist that the CFO consent to the price that you think is reasonable.

☐ Negotiation

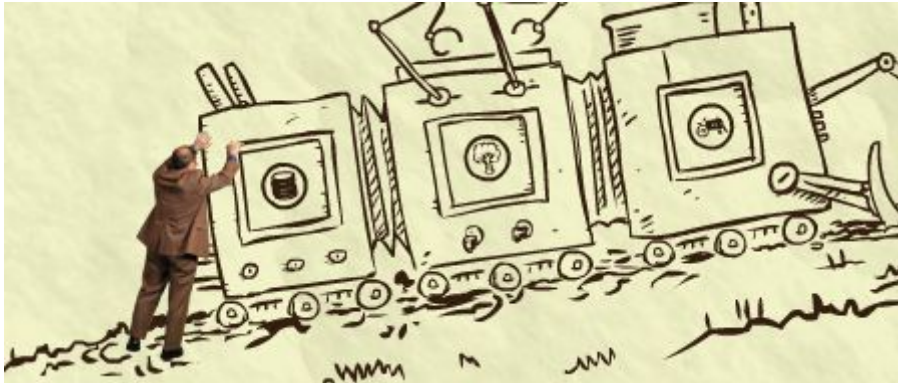
Correct choice. With his knowledge of internal company and product economics, the CFO probably has good reasons for thinking the games need to be priced higher. At the same time, he understands your reasons for thinking the price should be low, given your insight on the discounts that customers expect for online versions. Discussion and negotiation between the two of you will probably lead to a reasonable compromise.

☐ Participation

Not the best choice. The CFO already seems to be involved in the project, since he knows that you would prefer to sell the games at a low price.

The momentum challenge

“Successful innovation is not a feat of intellect, but a feat of will.”
–Joseph Schumpeter



Innovations take time to implement. Maintaining momentum for your project will likely prove difficult. It is much easier to get people excited over a vision at the beginning of a project than it is to maintain enthusiasm during the day-to-day progress toward your goal. You must sustain people's motivation to reach the goal by being a passionate and persistent advocate.

As your project moves from planning to implementation, you need to actively support your team, reassure the people who will be impacted by any changes, and keep the stakeholders who control the resources you need informed of your progress.

Key Idea: Maintain momentum

Key Idea

To keep your team and stakeholders motivated throughout your innovation's implementation, consider the following techniques for maintaining momentum:

- **Deliver on your promises.** Successful innovators underpromise and overdeliver. Don't make promises you aren't sure you can keep.
- **Meet deadlines.** Set realistic deadlines. Meeting deadlines demonstrates that your team is moving forward smoothly and is capable of implementing the entire project. If you miss a deadline, people may wonder if there are serious problems with your project or if the team lacks commitment.
- **Provide benefits early.** Look for ways to show the value of your project early. For example, at an early stage in the development of a new internal process.
- **Focus on short-term wins.** Set goals for yourself that can be achieved quickly. Once you achieve a goal, advertise your success. Small victories lend credibility to your overall innovation plan and build the morale of people on your implementation team.
- **Keep your supporters informed.** Once you get people's support, continue to update them on your progress. Plan to make frequent presentations to top management. You want influential people to maintain a high level of interest so they continue to view your project as relevant and important.
- **Motivate your team.** Many people concentrate on completing their routine activities, leaving work on special projects for slow times. If you ask people to increase their workload

to help with your innovation, foot dragging or inactivity is a constant danger. Meet with your project team regularly and consider circulating weekly status reports to keep everyone up to date.

- **Keep a low profile when you are vulnerable.** Prepare for problems that will surface during the project, and quietly work to solve them. Give yourself time to show progress. Once you have achieved a milestone or solved a problem, resurface and draw attention to your project.

As your project progresses, remember to be patient. It may take several months or even years to fully implement your innovation. Remind yourself that throughout history innovation champions have had to be persistent—and passionate—to get their ideas adopted.

Implementing an innovation can be difficult. How do you make sure you don't lose steam over time?

Leadership Insight: Revolutionary ideas

One of the most interesting examples of how to organize and be innovative around innovation has come in the world of encyclopedias. If you think about how knowledge was accumulated before in the last 100 years, the primary means of doing this was through books.

So Encyclopedia Britannica emerged as a way to accumulate the knowledge of the entire world, put it in a book form and then sell it door to door. And they made lots of money this way.

Then, in the early '90s, Microsoft approached this marketplace by thinking of a multimedia application, and they said, "We don't need to sell \$1,000 encyclopedias. We can sell a \$100 CD with all this knowledge put together and make the experience quite more interactive."

That Microsoft Encarta experience basically killed the Britannica model and started the revolution in multimedia. But even the Encarta model from Microsoft was upended through Wikipedia. Wikipedia came in 2001 as a new way of thinking about how to actually organize the world's knowledge.

Now, if you think about yourself, when was the last time you used Wikipedia? Most people say last week or this week sometime. But if you think about when was the last time you used Microsoft Encarta, most people have stopped using Encarta as a way to access knowledge. And almost nobody today goes to a book, an encyclopedia like Britannica, to get the knowledge. So the revolution has been quite spectacular just in business models.

But what's even more interesting is how Wikipedia is organized. What they said to their followers and to their users was, anybody could participate —anybody could submit an article, anybody can edit an article, and we will not limit what the encyclopedia is defined as being.

In the space of 10 years since Wikipedia has been launched, it has become one of the top 10 most trafficked Web sites in the world. And it has more coverage and better quality than what Britannica puts out or what Encarta puts out. This has been a revolution in how to actually think about how you can get masses of people from around the world to participate with you and to solve this problem of how to build an encyclopedia.

Now, just think about how counterintuitive this is. Imagine somebody at Microsoft going to Bill Gates in 1999 and saying, "You know, I've got a great idea for you. We should open up Encarta completely, we should put it on the Web and let anybody else participate in this creation. And we don't need to hire any more editors and any more smart people to create the content. People will do it by themselves for free."

This would never have flown within Microsoft. You can imagine that person being completely driven out by this kind of thinking. But it's indeed this type of thinking that enabled Wikipedia to take hold and to basically eat Microsoft's lunch.

Some innovations completely change and replace existing widely-used products.

Karim Lakhani
Assistant Professor, Harvard Business School

Karim Lakhani is an assistant professor in the Technology and Operations Management unit at Harvard Business School.

His research focuses on distributed innovation systems and the movement of innovative activity to the edges of organizations and communities. He has extensively studied the emergence of open source software communities and their unique innovation and product development strategies.

Karim previously worked for General Electric Medical Systems as a member of its Technical Leadership Program. He also worked as a consultant for The Boston Consulting Group.

He is the co-editor of "Perspectives on Free and Open Source Software" and cofounder of the MIT-based Open Source Research Community and Web portal. His research has been published in journals such as Research Policy, Organization Science, Sloan Management Review, and Harvard Business Review. The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, BusinessWeek, Inc., NPR, and other media organizations, have covered his research findings.

He earned his bachelor's degree in electrical engineering and management from McMaster University in Canada. Karim holds a doctorate in management and a master's in technology and policy, both from MIT.

Overview

This section provides interactive exercises so you can practice what you've learned. These exercises are self-checks only; your answers will not be used to evaluate your performance in the topic.

Scenario

Assume the role of a manager in a fictional situation and explore different outcomes based on your choices (5-10 minutes).

Check Your Knowledge

Assess your understanding of key points by completing a 10-question quiz (10 minutes).

Scenario: Part 1

Part 1

Ella is a marketing manager at New Generation (New Gen), a mid-size consumer foods company. She is concerned about the environment and is an avid recycler. Recently, she was surprised to learn that New Gen disposes of several tons of food waste every month at a local landfill.

New Gen uses consultants to monitor its environmental compliance with federal and state waste disposal regulations. Although New Gen is compliant, Ella believes there must be a better way to handle the waste. She discovers that if New Gen separated its waste into two streams, half of it could be sold to a local composting company and made into fertilizer. Ella calls the composting facility and learns that it is eager to get more high-quality waste—and has been seeking a new partner.

The timing seems perfect. Ella loves the idea because of its environmental benefits and wants to move quickly. She develops a vision statement and cultivates an informal network of supporters. She realizes she needs a sponsor since the idea she is promoting is not within the bounds of her job responsibility. So, she informally recruits the vice president of community relations to act as her project sponsor. With the help of this sponsor, she drafts a business case. After garnering support from several mid-level managers, Ella is eager to present her ideas to upper management to get approval to proceed.

What should Ella do next?

- Ella should identify the key decision makers in upper management she needs to see to get approval. She should schedule a meeting with them as soon as possible.

Not the best choice.

A common mistake innovators make is to focus on the decision makers while neglecting less obvious stakeholders and the people who influence them. If Ella rushes into a meeting without having spoken with the right people, she could jeopardize her idea. In this case, upper management probably views the outside consultants as environmental experts and will ask them for advice on this issue. If Ella does not approach the consultants early, she runs the risk of their picking apart her idea in front of management, thereby diminishing her credibility. Ella should work with her sponsor to develop a strategy for communicating with all the important stakeholders and influencers before meeting with key decision makers.

- Ella should ask her sponsor to attend a meeting where they could present her idea to upper management together. She should make sure that she includes all the key decision makers in this meeting.

Not the best choice.

In this case, Ella is on the right track when she seeks help from her sponsor. However, before they present the idea to upper management, they should identify all the important stakeholders and the people who influence them. She should then develop a strategy for getting support from all of them. In this situation, Ella should consider contacting the consultants for their input. Otherwise, she runs the risk of walking into a meeting with upper management, only to have a consultant give a list of reasons why Ella's idea would not work. She should also consider stakeholders in departments that might be indirectly impacted by her idea, such as accounting or purchasing.

- Ella should work with her sponsor to identify all of the key stakeholders and influencers she has yet to contact. She should then determine which ones to meet with next.

Correct choice.

Ella recognizes that before meeting with the decision makers, she needs to make sure she has identified *all* the important stakeholders and influencers—and developed a strategy for influencing them. Otherwise, she could jeopardize her project. In this case, the consultants are especially important because the decision makers will probably ask them for advice on Ella's idea. She knows that building support can require political finesse and a good understanding of the company as a whole. She has wisely asked her sponsor to help her develop a strategy for approaching *all* stakeholders and influencers before she seeks support from upper management.

Scenario: Part 2

Part 2

Ella worked with her sponsor to identify key influencers and other stakeholders whom she needed to approach before meeting with upper management. She met with these individuals and got some good feedback.

For example, the company's outside consultants gave her advice on how New Gen could modify its current waste-management process to separate the two waste streams and to get more value from the new system. She also obtained information from accounting

about current waste-management costs and was able to estimate the amount of money the company could save if it sold part of the waste to the composting facility.

Ella and her sponsor now feel ready to meet with the vice president of operations, the director of manufacturing, and the chief financial officer to get approval for a pilot project to test her idea. She decides to put together a slide presentation for her meeting with these decision makers.

How should Ella structure her presentation?

- She should focus her presentation on the environmental benefits of the proposal, emphasizing how the company could promote its environmental stewardship on its product labels.

Not the best choice.

A common mistake innovators make is to focus on their personal perspectives regarding their innovation and not on the perspectives of the decision makers. Ella should discover, with help from her sponsor or other friendly parties, each executive's interests before she makes her presentation. If one of the executives is known to be ecologically aware, it might make sense to appeal to this person by emphasizing the environmental benefits. However, the chief financial officer is probably most interested in the financial benefits. And since the vice president of operations and the director of manufacturing may be concerned with how the new system will impact their departments' responsibilities, Ella also needs to demonstrate the specific benefits of the new system for their departments. Depending on the audience, the environmental benefits may be a secondary benefit that she could mention after she has taken care of more primary concerns.

- She should focus her presentation on the details of the new waste-management system. To support her case, she should highlight the fact that the company's environmental compliance consultants have endorsed the system.

Not the best choice.

Innovators often focus on the features of a new product or system instead of its benefits to stakeholders. As a result, they do not address potential costs to different stakeholders, such as a change in job responsibilities. While the CFO, the vice president of operations, and the director of manufacturing will definitely be interested in the features of the new system, they will likely be more concerned about how the system will impact the work of their departments and its overall financial impact on the company. While citing the consultants' endorsement may be a good tactic to help influence her audience, listing the benefits to stakeholders is paramount.

- She should focus her presentation on how the system would impact each department. She should also present information on the financial implications and benefits of the system.

Correct choice.

In this case, Ella adapts her presentation to her audience. She focuses on the benefits that each affected department will experience as a result of using the new system. Based on the roles of the decision makers, she should include information about how the idea will save the company money, and how the new waste-separation system can be integrated into the current system with minimal impact on employees' jobs. If her idea requires a change in facility layout, she should talk with someone in manufacturing production and be ready to indicate how the problem might be addressed. She should also point out that the company's environmental consultants have endorsed the value of the system.

Scenario: Part 3

Part 3

Ella focuses her presentation on the benefits of the new system to the organization, its impact on various departments, and its appeal to environmentally conscious customers. Her presentation is well received. She gets permission to head a pilot project using the soup manufacturing unit and to work with manufacturing to purchase the required separation equipment. The executives ask her to hold a meeting for all the managers of the departments that would be involved in the pilot.

Ella arranges the meeting. Most people are enthusiastic about the idea and don't seem to have a problem with the required changes. However, two members of the audience voice resistance to the idea. The production manager for the soup division, who is known to be fiercely protective of his department, said that he couldn't change the setup of his waste retrieval system without causing major disruptions. The maintenance manager, who has been at New Gen for 20 years and is known to dislike change of any kind, expressed concern that his department would have to do extra work to keep the two waste streams separate—and to make sure that each was sent to the correct facility.

Ella knows that even though she has approval from upper management to proceed, without support at lower levels it will be hard to implement the pilot successfully.

How should Ella approach this resistance?

- She should ask the higher-level executives who have approved the pilot to tell the production and maintenance managers to support the project.

Not the best choice.

Getting upper management to mandate that others support the pilot can lead to surface-level compliance without removing the underlying resistance. This can make implementation very difficult. The production and maintenance managers will be important to the success of Ella's project. If she ignores their concerns and tries to move ahead on the basis of higher-level support, they may make excuses to delay the implementation of the new system. The production manager may feel threatened by Ella's intrusion into his department. The maintenance manager has a known reluctance to change the status quo. Once Ella discovers the causes of their resistance, she should develop strategies for getting the support of these important individuals.

- Ella should address the resistance voiced by both the production and maintenance managers.

Correct choice.

The production and maintenance managers are critical to the success of the pilot project. If Ella does not get their full support, they may make excuses to delay the implementation, and her project could fail. She should therefore try to understand the cause(s) of their resistance and seek their help to mitigate their concerns. This may well require modifications to the way the system is designed or implemented.

- Ella should address the resistance voiced by the production manager. She should ignore the concerns of the maintenance manager because he complains about everything and therefore is unlikely to influence anyone else.

Not the best choice.

Ella probably won't be able to neutralize every point of resistance she encounters. In this case, however, the resistance voiced by both the manufacturing and maintenance departments needs to be addressed because these departments will be integral to the success of her pilot project. While it may be tempting to ignore the maintenance manager's resistance as habitual given his reputation, he may have real issues that need to be worked out. In most real-life situations, there are often people who have an immediate negative response to new ideas. In cases where they are not essential to the success of the innovation, their resistance can be bypassed without harming the project. However, the decision to ignore any particular source of resistance has to be made carefully—based on the facts and issues—and should not be driven solely by the fact that the resister is compulsively uncooperative. In this case, Ella cannot ignore the resistance.

Scenario: Conclusion

Conclusion

After addressing the causes of the resistance she encountered, Ella organized a successful pilot project. The New Gen employees involved in the pilot found the new separation system easy to use and discovered that it did not interfere with the manufacturing process significantly. After a few preliminary hiccups in the process were resolved, the composting facility accepted all of the separated waste. The project resulted in a 40% reduction in landfill fees for the soup division and Ella determined that these savings would pay for the new equipment within two years. Ella is now excited about moving into full implementation.

Ella has managed the implementation process well. She recognized that she couldn't bring her ideas to fruition on her own. She gradually built support for her vision by identifying key stakeholders and developing a strategy for influencing each of them. She successfully communicated the benefits of her idea to each stakeholder and worked to overcome resistance. The result? She moved her idea from vision to reality.

Activity: Check Your Knowledge: Question 1

Which of the following is the *best* way to approach a potential sponsor about your innovative idea?

- "Do you have a few minutes to discuss a great new idea I have? I would really like your support in moving it forward."

Not the best choice.

Asking for support at this stage may make the person feel pressured into committing to your idea immediately. Since few people enjoy feeling pressured, asking for support may turn her off to your idea. Instead, you would want to say: "Do you have a few minutes to discuss an idea I have? I'd like your advice on how to move it forward."

By asking for advice instead of support, you engage the person in the development of the idea without making her feel that she has to commit to it immediately. After the person has had time to consider the merits of your idea—and decides that it is worth pursuing—you may be able to ask for help in developing a strategy for moving it forward and for getting support. The very process of being asked for help or advice creates a sense of ownership that can make this person want to be your sponsor.

- "Do you have a few minutes to discuss an idea I have? I am curious to see if you think it is worth pursuing."

Not the best choice.

At the early stages of your project, it is probably too soon for the person to objectively form an opinion on whether your idea is good or bad.

Instead, you would want to say: "Do you have a few minutes to discuss an idea I have? I'd like your advice on how to move it forward." By asking for advice instead of an evaluation of your idea's merit, you engage the person in the development of the idea without making her feel that she has to commit to it immediately. After the person has had time to consider the merits of your idea—and decides that it is worth pursuing—you may be able to ask for help in developing a strategy for moving it forward and for getting support. The very process of being asked for help or advice creates a sense of ownership that can make this person want to be your sponsor.

- "Do you have a few minutes to discuss an idea I have? I'd like your advice on how to move it forward."

Correct choice.

Most people are willing to give you a few minutes of their time to discuss a new idea. By asking for advice instead of support, you engage the person in the development of the idea without making her feel that she has to commit to it immediately. At the early stages of your project, it is probably too soon for the person to objectively form an opinion on whether your idea is good or bad. After the person has had time to consider the merits of your idea—and decides that it is worth pursuing—you may be able to ask for help in developing a strategy for moving it forward and for getting support. The very process of being asked for help or advice creates a sense of ownership that can make this person want to be your sponsor.

Check Your Knowledge: Question 2

When should you approach an important decision maker for support for your innovative idea?

- Once you have crafted a compelling vision statement and recruited a high-level sponsor

Not the best choice.

In addition to crafting a compelling vision statement and recruiting a high-level sponsor, you also need to build an informal network of supporters before approaching an important decision maker for support for your idea. Effective idea champions test their ideas on others first, and seek decision makers' support only after they have built a support network among peers and colleagues. However, waiting *too* long can often be as problematic as approaching someone too early. Your sponsor should be able to help you identify the appropriate time to approach the decision makers whose support you will need to ensure the success of your project.

- Once you have crafted a compelling vision statement, recruited a high-level sponsor, and built an informal network of supporters

Correct choice.

Effective idea champions *identify* the decision makers who will affect the success of their innovations early on, but they wait to *approach* them for support. They test their ideas on others first, and seek the decision makers' support only after they have built a support network among peers and colleagues. However, waiting *too* long can often be as problematic as approaching someone too early. Your sponsor should be able to help you identify the appropriate time to approach the decision makers whose support you will need to ensure the success of your project.

- Once you have crafted a compelling vision statement, recruited a high-level sponsor, built an informal network of supporters, and achieved some short-term wins

Not the best choice.

Though it's valuable to craft a compelling vision statement, recruit a high-level sponsor, and build an informal network of supporters, waiting to achieve some short-term wins before approaching key decision makers for support for your idea may drag out the process too long. It is sometimes tricky to determine when to approach an important decision maker for support. Typically, successful innovators first build a support network of peers and colleagues, and then seek support at higher levels. However, waiting too long can often be as problematic as approaching someone too early. Your sponsor should be able to help you identify the appropriate time to approach important decision makers.

Check Your Knowledge: Question 3

Which of the following is an example of how an innovator *failed* to recognize the evaluation criteria that her stakeholders would probably use to assess her idea?

- The innovator made a presentation to the manufacturing department about how her new vacuum cleaner could leverage the excellent manufacturing processes already in place in the factory and could cut down on the need for forced overtime to meet delivery demands

Not the best choice.

The innovator actually *succeeded* in recognizing the evaluation criteria her stakeholders would use to assess her idea. She did a good job addressing issues that would resonate with the manufacturing team. The correct answer is "The innovator made a presentation to potential customers about all the internal features of her new vacuum cleaner that made it cheaper to build." In this case, she failed because she did not show the customers how her product would benefit *them*. Describing the features that make the vacuum cleaner easier to build doesn't address customers' needs; therefore, her presentation didn't provide a compelling reason for customers to choose it over another brand.

- The innovator made a presentation to potential customers about all the internal features of her new vacuum cleaner that made it cheaper to build

Correct choice.

In this case, the innovator didn't show the customers how her product would benefit *them*. A good strategy for influencing stakeholders is to consider how your idea can provide benefits to that particular person. Successful ideas benefit different stakeholders in different ways. Describing features that make the vacuum cleaner easier to build doesn't address customers' needs; therefore, the innovator's presentation didn't provide a compelling reason for customers to choose it over another brand.

- The innovator made a presentation to the sales team about how they could promise to deliver more vacuum cleaners to their customers because of the speed with which her new design could be built

Not the best choice.

The innovator actually *succeeded* in recognizing the evaluation criteria her stakeholders would use to assess her idea. She did a good job addressing issues that would resonate with the sales team. The correct answer is "The innovator made a presentation to potential customers about all the internal features of her new vacuum cleaner that made it cheaper to build." In this case, she failed because she did not show the customers how her product would benefit *them*. Describing the features that make the vacuum cleaner easier to build doesn't address customers' needs; therefore, her presentation didn't provide a compelling reason for customers to choose it over another brand.

Check Your Knowledge: Question 4

As you develop an idea for a new feature for your company's best-selling software program, why would it be important to recruit a gatekeeper to help with your project?

- To help develop a strategy for presenting your ideas more effectively to management and to work behind the scenes to build support

Not the best choice.

Helping you develop a strategy for presenting your ideas to management and building support behind the scenes are activities your sponsor would do, not your gatekeeper. A gatekeeper provides technical advice and connections to other people who can help you with information, expertise, or other resources. A gatekeeper is usually an expert in a functional area or subject. Good gatekeepers have extensive contacts within and outside your organization. In this example, you would probably seek a software engineer who is up-to-date in her knowledge of the field and can serve as a useful sounding board and information resource.

- To provide technical advice and to connect you with other people who can help you with information, expertise, or other resources

Correct choice.

A gatekeeper is usually an expert in a functional area or subject. In this case, you would probably seek a software engineer who is up-to-date in her knowledge of the field and can serve as a useful sounding board and information resource. Good gatekeepers have extensive contacts within and outside your organization, so they can connect you with other people who can help you with information, expertise, or other resources.

- To lend credibility to your venture and to accelerate acceptance of your new idea by important decision makers

Not the best choice.

Lending credibility to your venture and accelerating acceptance of your new idea by important decision makers are activities an opinion leader would do, not your gatekeeper. A gatekeeper provides technical advice and connections to other people who can help you with information, expertise, or other resources. A gatekeeper is usually an expert in a functional area or subject. Good gatekeepers have extensive contacts within and outside your organization. In this example,

you would probably seek a software engineer who is up-to-date in her knowledge of her field and can serve as a useful sounding board and information resource.

Check Your Knowledge: Question 5

Which of the following is the best vision statement?

- "By standardizing our product and eliminating custom options, we will increase our earnings by 20%. We will build Web sites more quickly than our competitors and will leverage our years of design experience to create the best templates available."

Not the best choice.

This vision statement makes big promises without enough detail to make them credible. For example, people are not likely to see a 20% increase in earnings as a realistic goal without more information. Others might not believe the earnings increase necessary—or even desirable. A successful vision statement describes the direction the company will take and outlines why this new direction is necessary. It acknowledges the potential sacrifices people will have to make, but makes clear that the rewards will be worth the efforts.

So, the correct answer is: "We need to reduce the time we spend building Web sites in order to beat the competition. Otherwise, we can't survive in this market. Template-based Web sites will help us achieve our goal. Everyone will be asked to give extra effort over the next two months to design templates while completing current projects. But once we have a library of templates, we will be more productive, better able to meet our customers' aggressive schedules, and make money while we're at it!"

- "Standardization is our future. Without it, we will fail. We will provide the highest-quality, quickest-to-build, and easiest-to-maintain Web sites to our customers. Our design experience and technical expertise will differentiate us."

Not the best choice.

This vision statement makes a vague claim ("standardization is our future") without providing clarification. A successful vision statement describes the direction the company will take and outlines why this new direction is necessary. It acknowledges the potential sacrifices people will have to make, but makes clear that the rewards will be worth the efforts.

So, the correct answer is: "We need to reduce the time we spend building Web sites in order to beat the competition. Otherwise, we can't survive in this market. Template-based Web sites will help us achieve our goal. Everyone will be asked to give extra effort over the next two months to design templates while completing current projects. But once we have a library of templates, we will be more productive, better able to meet our customers' aggressive schedules, and make money while we're at it!"

- "We need to reduce the time we spend building Web sites in order to beat the competition. Otherwise, we can't survive in this market. Template-based Web sites will help us achieve our goal. Everyone will be asked to give extra effort over the next two months to design templates while completing current projects. But once we have a library of templates, we will be more

productive, better able to meet our customers' aggressive schedules, and make money while we're at it!"

Correct choice.

This statement clearly describes the direction the company will take and outlines why this new direction is necessary. It acknowledges the potential sacrifices people will have to make, but makes clear that the rewards will be worth the efforts.

Check Your Knowledge: Question 6

Decide whether the following statement is true or false: The best person to champion an idea is the person who thought of it.

- True

Not the best choice.

This statement is actually false. A common misconception is that the person who generates an idea should be the person to implement it. Often, the person who dreams up an idea is great at thinking creatively and identifying solutions to difficult problems. However, he often has neither the skills nor the temperament to bring his idea to fruition. An *innovation champion* has the know-how, energy, daring, dedication, and perseverance that are needed to turn an idea into reality. While many people in an organization can generate creative ideas, few people commit to putting ideas into action. When the idea creator also has the skills and interest to promote and implement his idea, he can be an effective champion, but this should not be taken for granted in every situation.

- False

Correct choice.

A common misconception is that the person who generates an idea should be the person to implement it. Often, the person who dreams up an idea is great at thinking creatively and identifying solutions to difficult problems. However, he often has neither the skills nor the temperament to bring his idea to fruition. An *innovation champion* has the know-how, energy, daring, dedication, and perseverance that are needed to turn an idea into reality. While many people in an organization can generate creative ideas, few people commit to putting ideas into action. When the idea creator also has the skills and interest to promote and implement his idea, he can be an effective champion, but this should not be taken for granted in every situation.

Check Your Knowledge: Question 7

Which of the following would *not* be addressed in an outline for a business case?

- A detailed breakdown of each of the steps you will take to achieve your goals

Correct choice.

You do *not* want to get caught up in project management specifics when crafting your business case. Include only the major milestones that illustrate progress toward your goals, not each step along the way. You can provide implementation details later, after the business case has generated interest in your project.

- [Specific resources you will need to achieve your goals](#)

Not the best choice.

You actually *would* address specific resources needed to achieve your goals while outlining your business case. However, you would *not* want to provide a detailed breakdown of each step you will take to achieve your goals. Include only the major milestones that illustrate progress toward your goals, not each step along the way. You can provide implementation details later, after the business case has generated interest in your project.

- [Estimated costs you will incur to achieve your goals](#)

Not the best choice.

You actually *would* address estimated costs you will incur to achieve your goals while outlining your business case. However, you would *not* want to provide a detailed breakdown of each step you will take to achieve your goals. Include only the major milestones that illustrate progress toward your goals, not each step along the way. You can provide implementation details later, after the business case has generated interest in your project.

Check Your Knowledge: Question 8

You sense that your company's warehouse supervisor is resisting your idea for a new distribution system because he feels overwhelmed by the role he will have to play in its implementation. Which of the following would be the best tactic to try to influence him to accept your idea?

- [Direction](#)

Not the best choice.

While exercising your authority may force the warehouse supervisor to start using the new distribution system, it will not address his feelings of being overwhelmed and possibly disgruntled. The correct answer is facilitation. Facilitation helps those who are likely to be affected adversely by the innovation to adapt to it. Providing training, skill building, and other forms of transitional support will likely help the supervisor feel less overwhelmed by the tasks involved in implementing your idea.

- [Participation](#)

Not the best choice.

Participation may make the warehouse supervisor feel more involved in the decision-making process, but it will not help him feel better equipped to use the new system. The correct answer is facilitation. Facilitation helps those who are likely to be affected adversely by the innovation to

adapt to it. Providing training, skill building, and other forms of transitional support will likely help the supervisor feel less overwhelmed by the tasks involved in implementing your idea.

- [Facilitation](#)

Correct choice.

Facilitation helps those who are likely to be affected adversely by the innovation to adapt to it. Providing training, skill building, and other forms of transitional support will likely help the supervisor feel less overwhelmed by the tasks involved in implementing your idea.

Check Your Knowledge: Question 9

Which of the following might *undermine* your team's enthusiasm for your idea as your project progresses?

- [Demonstrating benefits to stakeholders as early as possible](#)

Not the best choice.

Demonstrating early benefits for stakeholders would actually *help* you maintain interest in your project and motivate the people who are working with you. Focusing exclusively on your long-term goals, however, may not keep people motivated. In order to maintain momentum and enthusiasm, you need to concentrate on short-term wins. Set goals for your team that can be achieved quickly—and be sure to advertise your success!

- [Keeping a narrow focus on your long-term goals](#)

Correct choice.

Focusing exclusively on your long-term goals may not keep people motivated. In order to maintain momentum and enthusiasm, you need to concentrate on short-term wins. Set goals for your team that can be achieved quickly—and be sure to advertise your success!

- [Circulating weekly status reports to everyone on the project team](#)

Not the best choice.

Circulating frequent status reports would actually *help* you maintain interest in your project and motivate the people who are working with you. Focusing exclusively on your long-term goals, however, may not keep people motivated. In order to maintain momentum and enthusiasm, you need to concentrate on short-term wins. Set goals for your team that can be achieved quickly—and be sure to advertise your success!

Check Your Knowledge: Question 10

Why is it important to determine what specific help or support you will need from stakeholders *before* meeting with them?

- People won't oppose your idea if you ask them for specific help or support

Not the best choice.

You can't assume that people won't oppose your idea if you ask them for specific help or support. The correct answer is "People want to know how you plan to involve them in your project." By clearly identifying your objectives before you meet with each stakeholder (Do you want resources from him? Support from her?), you show why the person's involvement is important, and you make it clear what you are asking for. Otherwise, you may get a nod of acceptance, but no concrete support when you need it.

- People want to know how you plan to involve them in your project

Correct choice.

By clearly identifying your objectives before you meet with each stakeholder (Do you want resources from him? Support from her?), you show why the person's involvement is important, and you make it clear what you are asking for. Otherwise, you may get a nod of acceptance, but no concrete support when you need it.

- Asking for specific type of help or support makes people understand the need for your project

Not the best choice.

Asking for specific type of help or support does not necessarily make people understand the need for your project. The correct answer is "People want to know how you plan to involve them in your project." By clearly identifying your objectives before you meet with each stakeholder (Do you want resources from him? Support from her?), you show why the person's involvement is important, and you make it clear what you are asking for. Otherwise, you may get a nod of acceptance, but no concrete support when you need it.

Check Your Knowledge: Results

Your score:

Steps for developing your vision

1. Find a relaxing place to think.

Look for a quiet place where you can spend some time undisturbed. Sit down, relax, and close your eyes.

2. Focus on your idea.

Think of a time in the future when the innovation has been successfully realized. Imagine how your idea has unfolded. In a best-case scenario, what does your innovation look like? How are people responding to your idea? How has your idea impacted your company?

3. Shift your focus to yourself.

Next, imagine what it would feel like to experience the rewards of a successful implementation. Again, focus on the best-case scenario. What does success look like? How do you feel? Think about the outcome, not about how you achieved it.

4. Record your vision.

After about five minutes of visualizing, record your vision in whatever way you think is best. You might sketch a picture, build a model, or write a paragraph to describe your vision.

See the worksheet for crafting a vision statement for help in capturing your vision on paper.

5. Replay your vision regularly.

On a regular basis, replay the vision in your mind. Regular reflection will help to keep you focused on the creative implementation of your idea—and help you stay motivated when you face inevitable obstacles or setbacks.

6. Convey your vision with excitement and enthusiasm.

Once you can describe your vision, it is time to test it. Telling people about your idea with excitement and enthusiasm will help to attract them to it. Ask colleagues and friends to react to your idea and help you revise your vision to make it even more compelling and clear.

Steps for building support for your idea

1. Seek input and advice.

As you develop your idea, ask for input from trusted friends and colleagues. Don't try to sell your idea at this point. Instead, ask them to identify potential problems and flaws in your thinking. Ask them to challenge your assumptions and suggest ways to improve your idea. Revise your idea based on the feedback you receive.

2. Identify stakeholders.

Consider who will be impacted by your idea and who controls the resources you will need to implement it. Ask yourself how these people might respond to your idea. Before you meet with them, anticipate their concerns and be prepared to answer their questions. The person you choose as your sponsor should be able to offer insights about the decision makers and stakeholders you'll need to win over.

3. Develop a communication strategy.

After you have explored the details of your project and feel ready to seek outside support, develop a strategy for influencing stakeholders. Work with your sponsor or other trusted advisers to decide how and when to approach each person. For some, an informal meeting may suffice. For others, a detailed presentation may be more appropriate. Make sure to identify your objectives for speaking with each stakeholder so that you know what you are asking for before you meet with them.

4. Meet with important stakeholders.

Implement the communication strategy you developed. Present your ideas and ask for input and support. Revise your communication strategy based on the feedback you receive in early meetings. If you meet with strong resistance, take a step back to understand its causes so that you can address it properly.

5. Keep supporters informed of your progress.

Make sure to keep your sponsor and key stakeholders informed of your progress. You want your project to stay in the forefront of your supporters' minds so they will continue to view it as important and relevant.

Steps for building a preliminary business case

1. Make an outline.

Using your vision statement as a guide, make an outline of the topics you want to address in your business case. These could include goals, potential customers, the competition, the expected benefits of implementation, a preliminary timeline, and cost and labor estimates. It's a good idea to include potential obstacles and how you will address them, because decision makers and stakeholders will most likely ask about anticipated problems.

2. Fill in details where you can.

Work alone or with a group of people to document the information you already know for each topic in your outline. You may need to make estimates for topics such as profit projections, resource requirements, time frames, and costs. Be sure to note your assumptions. They may be challenged, so you'll need to be prepared to defend them.

3. Gather data.

Gather data and do research to fill in the gaps in your business plan. Explore your assumptions to see if you can find any facts that either support or undermine them. Based on what you learn, update your business case. Remember that the process of building a business case is just as valuable as the document you create. By exploring the details of your project, you become an expert in what it is you're proposing.

4. Ask for feedback.

Show your preliminary business case to trusted advisers and supporters in your informal network. Ask for advice on how to strengthen your case. Revise your document based on the input you receive.

5. "Presell" your idea.

Before anyone in a position to decide the fate of your idea attends a formal presentation or reviews your business case, they should already be favorably disposed to your idea. Arrange an informal meeting with these people to ask for their advice on the ideas you have explored in your business case. Don't present them with the case at this point; just discuss it. You can then improve your document by incorporating the feedback you receive.

6. Create multiple documents for different audiences.

Using the information you gather, create different versions of your document for different stakeholders.

For example, you might want to have a detailed document for your team to use. You might want to prepare a higher-level slide presentation for communicating your idea to potential supporters. Also consider drafting an executive summary that highlights the major points in your case relevant to each stakeholder group. This short document will remind stakeholders of your proposed innovation's benefits and can facilitate a more specific discussion of your idea.

Steps for overcoming resistance

1. Listen attentively to all feedback.

Pay attention when people criticize your idea. Ask probing questions to get at the heart of their concerns.

For example, you might ask: "Can you tell me more about that?" "Can you share with me the facts that support your opinion?" Often those who criticize are aware of something that you can't see. Their honest feedback may help you strengthen your plan or improve the way you present your idea.

2. Consider your critic's role and reputation.

If the criticism does not seem to be constructive, work with your sponsor or other advisers to evaluate the person's importance. Is the person opposing your idea essential to its successful implementation? Is he someone who can influence others or who controls resources you need to implement your idea? Do you need his support to continue? If the answer to any of these questions is yes, you may need to devise a strategy to overcome the resistance. If the person is viewed as a chronic complainer, however, you may not need to win his support.

3. Identify the cause of the resistance.

Consider why this person opposes your idea. Is the resistance due to some shortcoming of the idea itself or due to how it impacts this person? Is she feeling threatened? Is she apprehensive about the risks? Is she too busy to take on more responsibility and afraid that you may ask her to contribute to your project? Is she concerned that she will no longer be needed when the project is complete? You may want to ask your sponsor or someone who is removed from the project to help you identify the cause(s) of resistance.

4. Develop a strategy to manage resistance.

Based on what you know about the person and the likely cause(s) of resistance, decide on an approach to manage resistance. If risk is his concern, consider trying to persuade him with facts and logic as to how you will mitigate or manage the elements of risk. If he seems threatened by the project, encourage his participation by asking for advice and inviting him to meetings. Other tactics you might consider include providing training to make the person feel less overwhelmed, offering the person something in exchange for his support, providing more data to support your proposal, or simply directing the person to complete the task at hand.

5. Continue to build a large support network.

Recognize that you might not be able to convince everyone to support your project. However, the more people who support you, the more likely you are to overcome other opponents.

Tips for choosing a sponsor

- Select your sponsor(s) carefully. Look for people who have stood up for an idea, been challenged, and proceeded anyway—people who were innovation champions themselves earlier in their careers. Seek individuals that seem to have a deep commitment to innovation and to innovative people.
- Start with the influential people you already know. Are you friendly with a senior executive in your company who has the respect of important decision makers—and access to them? If so, consider asking this person for advice on how to pursue your idea.
- Consider the types of resources and support you will need. Look for someone who is politically savvy and skilled at finding resources for special projects.
- Evaluate your potential sponsor's current workload and commitments. Does he have the time to help and guide you? If not, you can still seek advice from this person but should probably find someone else to help you on a regular basis.
- Consider recruiting multiple sponsors. As your needs change, you may need people with different areas of expertise or who have access to different decision makers and resources.

Tips for choosing a gatekeeper

- Look for people, either inside or outside your company, who have technical or functional expertise relevant to your idea.

For example, a customer-savvy sales professional could help you position your idea for a new shampoo that leverages your well-known soap brand. Then ask yourself whether you think they would be willing—and have the time—to share this expertise.

- You will rely on a gatekeeper to be a sounding board for your ideas and to help you find answers to tough questions. Look for someone who has a passion for her area of expertise and is willing to take the time to make sure you understand technical issues.
- A gatekeeper who has connections can help you get additional information and resources. Look for people who have extensive informal networks you can plug into, both within and outside of your organization.
- Cover all your bases. Finding one gatekeeper is usually not enough. Think strategically and recruit gatekeepers who will help with your idea in different functional areas.

Tips for choosing an opinion leader

- People who are sought out for their opinions on new or important issues can be instrumental in building support for your idea. Try to involve at least one of these influential thought leaders in your project early.
- Look for someone in your organization who is frequently asked to present new processes, products or services to people in and outside the company. Do you find her persuasive? If so, this person might be an excellent spokesperson for your idea.
- Expand your search for an opinion leader outside your organization. An opinion leader could be an external consultant or expert that people in your organization trust.
- Opinion leaders should actively support your idea. Seek out people who will endorse your idea publicly to help accelerate its acceptance.
- Look for someone who will make the time in his schedule to attend meetings with important stakeholders to help influence their opinions.

Tips for promoting acceptance of your idea

- Consider whether your idea complements an already successful initiative. If it does, seek out the people who are managing the other initiative and explore ways to link your idea with their work. By piggybacking your idea with other projects, you may be able to take advantage of pooled resources.
- Create and show drawings, prototypes, models, or other proof-of-concept tools to give people a concrete idea of what your innovation looks like.
- Dramatize the benefits for maximum impact. When talking about your idea to stakeholders, emphasize how your project will improve upon the status quo.
- Connect your innovation with each stakeholder's needs, wants, and priorities. When you are seeking stakeholder support, tailor your presentation to address the individual interests of your audience.
- When you enter the action phase of the project, make sure that the people who will be doing the work have the support tools, time, and training necessary to implement your idea. People will be more inclined to buy into the work if they feel well trained and prepared.
- Implement in small chunks. Setting small, realistic goals for yourself and your team will help you meet deadlines, deliver on your promises, and demonstrate early wins.

Worksheet for crafting a vision statement

<i>Worksheet for Crafting a Vision Statement</i>
<i>Use this worksheet to draft a vision statement to share with others. See Steps for Developing Your Vision for help with envisioning the idea that you will record in your vision statement.</i>
Description of Idea: Briefly describe your idea. Do you have a name for the idea or project?
Idea Assessment: Does your idea address a perceived need or solve a problem? If so, what is it? If not, you may want revisit your idea.
Users or Customers: List the end users or customers for this innovation.
Benefits: List the key benefits that make this idea worth pursuing. <i>For example, will it lead to larger markets and growth, increase profits, or make your organization more efficient?</i>
Draft Vision Statement: Using the information you have recorded above, draft a preliminary vision statement. <i>Start with a short paragraph. Since the goal is to stir up enthusiasm for your idea, describe your goals vividly. Be sure that your statement clearly and concisely communicates your idea and appeals to your stakeholders' interests.</i>
Feedback: Once you have a preliminary statement, ask some close friends or colleagues for feedback. Record the responses you receive here. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
Revised Statement: Now, revise your vision statement based on the feedback you receive.

Checklist for evaluating a sponsor

<i>Checklist for Evaluating a Sponsor</i>				
<i>Use this tool to assess whether someone has the characteristics of a successful sponsor.</i>				
The potential sponsor . . .	Rating			
	To an exceptional degree	More than most managers	Average	Below average
1. Has shown a commitment to innovation and innovative people in the past				
2. Has the respect of important decision makers in your organization				
3. Has access to important decision makers in your organization				
4. Understands how decisions are made in your organization and knows the key players				
5. Has a good sense of what is worth fighting for, and knows when to back down				
6. Already has a high level of respect for you or you believe you could gain their respect				
7. Has overcome challenges and resistance in the past to get something done				
8. Is skilled at getting resources and support for projects				
9. Is politically savvy				
10. Encourages employees to take risks and supports them				
11. Has the time to assist				
12. Is a good listener				

Results

If your ratings are primarily "to an exceptional degree" or "more than most managers," this person is probably a good choice. Before asking someone to be your sponsor, assess his/her current time commitments and availability. Be sure that the person you select has both the characteristics and the time necessary to be a successful sponsor.

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Form for communicating with a stakeholder

<i>Form for Communicating with a Stakeholder</i>	
<i>The support of stakeholders is critical to the implementation of your idea. Use this form to prepare for meetings with stakeholders. Complete one form for each stakeholder. After your meeting, use the Form for Managing Communications Follow-Up to identify your next steps.</i>	
Part I : Your Stakeholder	
Identify your stakeholder.	
<i>Who is she? What is her title? What are her key responsibilities?</i>	
How will this stakeholder view your innovation?	
<i>For example, how does the idea impact her power, status, work schedule, etc.? How does this idea benefit her? List the benefits and disadvantages in the table below.</i>	
Benefits	Disadvantages
<i>Example: A change in the process will enable her employees to produce 10 more circuit boards per shift.</i>	<i>Example: A change in the process will eliminate the need for one assembly line worker per shift.</i>

Part II: Your Communication Approach
<p>Where will you meet? <i>Should the meeting be on neutral territory? In a conference room? In your office?</i></p>
<p>What is the specific objective you want to accomplish in your meeting? <i>Are you asking for support, advice, or buy-in?</i></p>
<p>How are you going to influence this person? <i>For example, what benefits for her and/or the company will you emphasize?</i></p>
<p>How will you present your idea? <i>Will you present your idea using visual aids, drawings, and/or prototypes? What backup data will you use; for example, research or marketing reports?</i></p>

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Form for managing communications follow-up

<i>Form for Managing Communications Follow-Up</i>	
<p><i>After you meet with a stakeholder, you should develop a follow-up strategy. Use this form to track your progress in winning the support of your stakeholders. Use it in conjunction with the Communicating with Stakeholders Form and, if applicable, with the Worksheet for Managing Resistance.</i></p>	
Contact Name:	Contact Role:
Meeting Date:	
Proposed Innovation:	
Questions They Asked:	
Feedback You Received:	
Positive	Negative
<p>Meeting Outcome: Use the space below to indicate what you accomplished in the meeting or any problems that surfaced. <i>For example, did the person support your idea or show resistance? Did you set an expectation that you would follow up? If so, how?</i></p>	
<p>Next Steps: List the actions you will take and record the date you want to complete them. <i>For example, will you meet with the person again? Should you provide the person with supporting documents? Do you need to follow up on any questions? If so, when?</i></p>	
Action	Completion Date

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Worksheet for overcoming resistance

<i>Worksheet for Overcoming Resistance</i>
<p><i>Use this tool to diagnose the cause of resistance, and plan how you might overcome it.</i></p>
Part I: Identifying Resistance
Name:
<p>How has the resistance been expressed? <i>For example, has the person said in a meeting that your idea will never work or said that it is too risky? Has he refused to complete a task you asked of him?</i></p>

Is this person critical to the success of your project?

For example, does he control resources you will need? Is he likely to influence other important decision makers? Do you need him to work directly on your implementation?

What do you think might be the underlying cause(s) of the resistance?

Are their legitimate reasons for this person to resist the idea, such as high cost or risk? Or does she feel threatened by the idea? Is she generally opposed to changing the status quo?

Part II. Identifying Tactics to Overcome Resistance

Answer Yes, No, or Unsure to help identify a strategy for approaching this person.

Statement	Yes	No	Unsure
1. I need this person's ideas, skills, or information to improve my project.			
2. This person needs to have a sense of ownership in this project for it to succeed.			
3. I am open to sharing credit or control with this person.			
<p>If you answered yes to at least two of the questions above, you might want to consider using the participation tactic. To use this tactic effectively, you could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involve the person by asking for ideas or other contributions to the project. Share ownership or credit for your idea or its implementation with this person. 			
4. My proposal will probably cause a major inconvenience to this person or to the people that work for her.			
5. This person or the people that work for him will need training or other support to implement my idea.			
6. The status quo is probably more appealing to this person than the idea of initiating a change.			
<p>If you answered yes to at least two of the questions above, you might want to consider using the facilitation tactic. To use this tactic effectively, you could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide the skills needed. Provide training and other forms of transition support to help the person feel less overwhelmed. 			
7. This person tends to make decisions based on reason, not on emotion.			
8. This person does not appear to feel threatened by my idea.			
9. This person is probably not aware of the details of the innovation and the potential benefits it will have.			
<p>If you answered yes to at least two of the questions above, you might want to consider using the persuasion tactic. To use this tactic effectively, you could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use data, evidence, facts, and logic. Communicate the features and benefits of your idea. 			
10. In exchange for this person's support, I am willing to modify the idea or its implementation.			
11. This person has a reputation for being able to work through differences to find a solution.			
12. I have something (e.g., resources) that this person needs for another project.			
<p>If you answered yes to at least two of the questions above, you might want to consider using the negotiation tactic. To use this tactic effectively, you could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the aspects of the project that are of concern and possible alternatives. Make compromises or trade-offs in the design or implementation of your idea. 			
13. I need this person to complete a task or to provide resources for my project.			
14. I have the authority to tell this person that she needs to do something or I have a strong supporter that has that level of authority.			
15. Expectations of rewards or disciplinary action are likely to motivate this person to do what I need them to do.			
<p>If you answered yes to at least two of the questions above, you might want to consider using the direction tactic. To use this tactic effectively, you could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use your power or authority to ask that something be done. Seek the authority of a high-level supporter or sponsor to ask that something be done. 			
<p>Please note: If you scored within the suggested range for multiple tactics, consider using more than one approach based on what you know about the person's work style and personality.</p>			

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Why Develop Others?

“At the end of the day, you bet on people, not strategies.”

Larry Bossidy

Former CEO, AlliedSignal

In today's global business environment, markets and regulations change quickly. Competitors constantly innovate. Technological changes are the norm.

In order to outmaneuver the competition and meet the demands of the moment, organizations must be agile. They must execute flawlessly. And they must transform themselves continuously.

Are your leaders ready?

Dr. Noel M. Tichy

Professor

University of Michigan Ross School of Business

We have now entered an era where I don't care what industry you're in, you need leaders who can make decisions, make judgment calls at every single level. All the way down to the interface with the customer.

If you go to a company like Google or any of the high tech companies, a lot of the innovation that Amazon does is happening right at the front line. Go ahead, try it, put it out there, we'll learn from it. That cannot happen if the senior leadership doesn't have a commitment to both develop the leadership capability, but develop the business through engaging people at all levels of the organization.

Becoming a teaching organization

I like to tell parents that they cannot delegate their responsibility to develop their children. And I think it is the same in an organization. Day in and day out the person that has the biggest impact on people in the organization is the next level above and the associates around and below. And so to build a learning organization I say is not enough. Learning could be, you know we are learning cooking, we are learning this or that, but teaching organizations, when I learned something, I have a responsibility to teach my colleagues.

So everybody takes responsibility for generating new knowledge and it is not enough to be a learner, you then have to translate it into teaching.

The Virtuous Teaching Cycle

The role of a leader is to ensure that the people who work for them and around them are better every day. There's only one way to make people better. It's to teach them, learn from them, create what I call "virtuous teaching cycles", not command and control.

A virtuous teaching cycle is teach learn, teach learn. And the leader has a responsibility for reducing the hierarchy, for having a point of view to start the discussion, but then to be responsible to hear everyone's voice, get everyone involved in a disciplined way. It is not a free for all. But it is the leader's responsibility to create that virtuous teaching cycle.

A wonderful example of virtuous teaching cycle is the program that Roger Enrico ran at Pepsi, where every one of the 10 vice presidents comes with a business project.

Roger Enrico gets smarter as result of five days with 10 vice presidents, because he's learning from them. He needs to lower the hierarchy. He needs to be open to learning. And in turn, the people participating need to be energized and empowered to come up and engage in problem solving.

Another example is at Best Buy, where every morning in the stores you would bring 20 associates or so together and they would review the profit and loss statement from the day before, what we learned from the different customer segments in our stores, what we can do to improve our performance this day. And they do that every single day. The store manager was learning mostly from the associates on the floor.

That was a virtuous teaching cycle where everybody is teaching everybody, everybody is learning and the result has been an incredible result at Best Buy.

“The growth and development of people is the highest calling of leadership.”

- Harvey S. Firestone

Founder, Firestone Tire and Rubber Co

There are clear advantages to leader-led development.

But for many leaders, taking on teaching, coaching, and other development responsibilities can seem daunting. You might avoid taking on these roles due to lack of time, resources, or your own lack of comfort with this role.

The following tips and resources can help you impart valuable learning to your team every day.

To develop others...

- Start with a Teachable Point of View

The first requirement of being able to develop other leaders is to have what I call a teachable point of view. I often give the example of, if I ran a tennis camp and you just came to day one of the tennis camp, I better have a teachable point of view on how I teach tennis. So you are standing there looking at me and it has got four elements. One, the ideas, well how do I teach the backhand, the forehand, the serve, rules of tennis. Then if I am a good tennis coach, I have a set of values. What are the right behaviors I want, how do I want you to dress, how do I want you to behave on the tennis court.

But if that's all I have, what do I do? Show you a power point presentation and then expect you to hit 500 backhands, 500 serves, run around for eight hours. I have to have a teachable point of view on emotional energy. How do I motivate you to buy in to the ideas and values?

On one end of the spectrum it could be I threaten you with corporal punishment, the other I can give you stock options, I can make you feel good about yourself, I can help you develop as a human being, what motivates you.

And then finally, how do I make the tough judgment calls, the yes/no, decisions as the tennis coach, the ball is in, the ball is out. I don't hire consultants and set up a committee, it is yes/no. And the same with running a business, what are the products, services, distribution channels, customer segments that are going to grow top line growth and profitability of the organization.

What are the values that I want everyone in the organization to have, how do I emotionally energize thousands of people, and then how do I make the yes/no, judgments on people and on business issues. So the fundamental building block of being able to develop other leaders is to have that teachable point of view just like the tennis coach.

To develop others...

- Lead with questions

Questions are hugely important because you want to create dialogue and again, what I call a virtuous teaching cycle where the teacher learns from the students and vice versa. Which means everybody ought to be free to ask whatever is on their mind, whatever it will take to get clarity and understanding, but it is not the leader just coming in and freeform asking questions. I believe the leader has a responsibility for framing the discussion, for having as best they can a teachable point of view, they may need help from their people in flushing it out, but they need to set the stage but then it has to be a very interactive, what I call virtuous teaching cycle environment, teach learn, teach learn, teach learn.

To develop others...

- Make it part of your routine

A good example to me of an outstanding leader developing other leaders is Myrtle Potter who at the time I am commenting was Chief Operating Officer of Genentech running the commercial side of the business. And she would take time at the end of every single meeting and do some coaching of the whole team on how we could perform as a team better, and then she would often take individuals and say, could we spend 10 minutes over a cup of coffee, I want to give you some feedback and coaching on that report that you just presented on or how you are handling a particularly difficult human resource issue, but it was part of her regular routine. And I think the challenge for all of us as leaders is to make that a way of life and it is built into the fabric of how we lead and it is not a one off event, three times a year. It is happening almost every day.

To develop others...

- Make it a priority

One of the biggest challenges in getting people kind of on this path is to overcome some of their own resistance, either fear or the way I view the world I don't have time for this, everybody can make time. Roger Enrico is CEO of Pepsi. He didn't have time to go off for a week at a time and run training sessions. He had to readjust his calendar. So it requires you to look in the mirror and say, is this important. If it is important, of course I can make the time. Then I have to get over my own anxiety on how well I can do it, but it is a commitment to get on the path that says: this is how I am going to drive my own performance and the performance of my colleagues.

To develop others...

- Learn to teach

I think the biggest mistake is to assume you are going to be good at it right off the bat. It is like learning anything else. First time you go out and try and play tennis, good luck. But you got to stay with it and you got to engage your people in helping make you better and them better. And so it is a journey you need to get on, not I am going to do it perfectly when I start out.

If you want to be a great leader who is a great teacher, it's very simple. You have got to dive into the deep end of the pool. But you've got to dive into the pool with preparation. I don't want you drowning. I want you succeeding. It is extraordinarily rewarding for most human beings to teach others. I think once you can turn that switch on, it is self perpetuating. You get a lot of reinforcement, your team is better. You perform better because your performance goes up and it becomes this virtuous teaching cycle.

Your opportunity to develop others

We've heard why developing others can drive greater business results, and how to make the most of your leader-led development efforts. The materials provided in Develop Others enable you to create personalized learning experiences for YOUR team within the flow of their daily activities. Use the guides and projects to engage your team quickly. And to explore how key concepts apply to them in the context of their priorities and goals.

The value of teaching is the performance of the organization is totally dependent on making your people smarter and more aligned every day as the world changes. In the 21st century we are not going to get by with command and control. We are going to have to get by with knowledge creation. The way you create knowledge in an organization is you create these virtuous teaching cycles where you are teaching and learning simultaneously, responding to customer demands and changes, responding to changes in the global environment. My bottom line is if you're not teaching, you're not leading.

A leader's most important role in any organization is making good judgments — well informed, wise decisions about people, strategy and crises that produce the desired outcomes. When a leader shows consistently good judgment, little else matters. When he or she shows poor judgment nothing else matters. In addition to making their own good judgment calls, good leaders develop good judgment among their team members.

Dr. Noel M. Tichy

Professor, University of Michigan Ross School of Business

Dr. Noel M. Tichy is Professor of Management and Organizations, and Director of the Global Business Partnership at the University of Michigan Ross School of Business. The Global Business Partnership links companies and students around the world to develop and engage business leaders to incorporate global citizenship activities, both environmental projects and human capital development, for those at the bottom of the pyramid. Previously, Noel was head of General Electric's Leadership Center at Crotonville, where he led the transformation to action learning at GE. Between 1985 and 1987, he was Manager of Management Education for GE where he directed its worldwide development efforts at Crotonville. He currently consults widely in both the private and public sectors. He is a senior partner in Action Learning Associates. Noel is author of numerous books and articles, including:

For more information about Noel Tichy, visit <http://www.noeltichy.com>.

Share an Idea

Leaders are in a unique position to recognize the ideas and tools that are most relevant and useful for their teams. If you only have a few minutes, consider sharing an idea or tool from this topic with your team or peers that is relevant and timely to their situation.

For example, consider sending one of the three recommended ideas or tools below to your team with your comments or questions on how the idea or tool can be of value to your organization. By simply sharing the item, you can easily engage others in important conversations and activities relevant to your goals and priorities.

[Characteristics of an effective vision statement](#)

[Tips for promoting acceptance of your idea](#)

[Steps for overcoming resistance](#)

To share an idea, tip, step, or tool with your comments via e-mail, select the EMAIL link in the upper right corner of the page that contains the idea, tip, step, or tool that you wish to share.

Discussion 1: Overcoming resistance to your innovation

When your team members come up with ideas for new products or services, or new ways of carrying out work, they may meet with resistance from various individuals in the group or organization. Some may insist that the new idea is too risky or too expensive, for example. Others might drag their feet when it comes time to put the new idea into action.

To ensure that their good ideas get implemented, your team members need to understand the types and causes of resistance they may encounter when promoting a new idea. Then they must craft strategies for overcoming resistance, including understanding what's causing the resistance and selecting the right strategy for combating it.

Use these resources to lead a discussion with your team about what kinds of resistance they can expect to a new idea they're promoting, and how to overcome it.

Download resources:

[Discussion Invitation: Overcoming Resistance to Your Innovation](#)

[Discussion Guide: Overcoming Resistance to Your Innovation](#)

[Discussion Slides: Overcoming Resistance to Your Innovation \(optional\)](#)

[Tips for Preparing for and Leading the Discussion](#)

Note: Consider inviting all your team members to the discussion — not just those who are working on innovative ideas. Those who are working on new ideas can gather suggestions from others on how to combat resistance. Those who aren't currently working on ideas can learn by watching the others develop their strategies.

Working through the discussion guide can take up to 45 minutes. If you prefer a shorter 15- or 30-minute session, you may want to focus only on those concepts and activities most relevant to your situation.

Discussion 2: Maintaining momentum

When your team members have an idea for a new product or service or a better way of carrying out a work process, it's relatively easy for them to generate enthusiasm for their idea early in the effort. After all, the idea is new! And newness is always exciting.

But as their idea moves from the planning stage into the implementation stage, all that enthusiasm can start to wear off. For many people (including stakeholders supporting your team members' ideas), implementation isn't nearly as interesting as the creation of fresh ideas. And, during implementation, problems inevitably start to crop up — such as delays and resource shortages. Problems can take much of the fun out of turning a great idea into an actual innovation, and supporters may lose interest or drift away.

To prevent this from happening, your team members need to anticipate how enthusiasm for their idea could start drying up during implementation. Then they must craft strategies for maintaining or reviving enthusiasm.

Use these resources to lead a discussion with your team about how to keep the excitement alive when their innovative idea moves through the implementation phase.

Download resources:

[Discussion Invitation: Maintaining Momentum](#)

[Discussion Guide: Maintaining Momentum](#)

[Discussion Slides: Maintaining Momentum \(optional\)](#)

[Tips for Preparing for and Leading the Discussion](#)

Note: Consider inviting all your team members to the discussion — not just those who are working on innovative ideas. Those who are working on new ideas can gather suggestions from others on how to maintain momentum during implementation. Those who aren't currently working on ideas can learn by helping others develop their strategies.

Working through the discussion guide can take up to 45 minutes. If you prefer a shorter 15- or 30-minute session, you may want to focus only on those concepts and activities most relevant to your situation.

Start a Group Project

Just like any change effort, successfully incorporating new skills and behaviors into one's daily activities and habits takes time and effort. After reviewing or discussing the concepts in this topic, your direct reports will still need your support to fully apply new concepts and skills. They will need to overcome a variety of barriers including a lack of time, lack of confidence, and a fear of making mistakes. They will also need opportunities to hone their skills and break old habits. To help ensure their success, you can provide safe opportunities for individuals and your team as a whole to practice and experiment with new skills and behaviors on the job.

For example, to encourage the adoption of new norms, you can provide your team members with coaching, feedback, and additional time to complete tasks that require the use of new skills. Management approaches such as these will encourage team members to experiment with new skills until they become proficient.

Group learning projects provide another valuable technique for accelerating team members' development of new behaviors. A group learning project is an on-the-job activity aimed at providing team members with direct experience implementing their new knowledge and skills. Through a learning project, team members discover how new concepts work in the context of their situation, while simultaneously having a direct and tangible impact on the organization.

The documents below provide steps, tips, and a template for initiating a group learning project with your team, along with two project recommendations for this topic.

Download resources:

[Tips for Initiating and Supporting a Learning Project](#)

[Learning Project Plan Template](#)

[Learning Project: Build a Support Network for Your Innovation](#)

[Learning Project: Win Buy-In for Your Idea from Key Stakeholders](#)

Cultivating a Healthy Appetite for Risk

Anne Field. "Cultivating a Healthy Appetite for Risk." *Harvard Management Update*, February 2008.

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Summary

Successful innovations deliver tremendous value, generating new products, fresh strategies, and better processes. But most managers shy away from the risk taking that innovation necessarily involves. To cultivate a healthy appetite for risk, organizations can learn to extract more value from the inevitable failures. This article explains how to create a risk-friendly culture by increasing the potential gains and reducing the potential costs of risk taking, reducing individuals' accountability on riskier projects, and productively managing failure.

Why Good Innovations Don't Get to Market

Michael Beer, Russell A. Eisenstat, and Derek Schrader. "Why Good Innovations Don't Get to Market." *Harvard Management Update*, October 2007.

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Summary

Although creating an environment in which candid communication thrives is difficult, not doing so may prevent your creative initiatives from taking off. In fact, it's the major reason that many technically excellent innovations get stuck inside an organization and never make it to market. To create stronger innovation strategies, leaders face the difficult task of sparking organization-wide conversations about internal problems. This article takes the real-life examples of BD (formerly Becton, Dickinson & Company) and Mattel Canada to illustrate a four-point process for fostering such discussions.